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An infinity of frustration

By R. J. Hollingdale

J. P. STERN (Editor):
The World of Franz Kafka
263pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
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0 297 77845 5

You are expecting to receive tomorrow a letter the contents of which may determine the course of your life, though again they may not. You go to sleep thinking about this letter, and you wake up the following morning thinking about it. You open the curtains and see that outside it is snowing hard. You say to yourself: "The postman will be late this morning because the snow will delay him. The thought is about to make you nervous and irritable—for you want to get the letter into your hands as soon as possible—when it occurs to you that it may have just the opposite effect: the snow may cause the postman to walk faster than usual so as to finish his round as quickly as he can and return to the warmth of the sorting office. Under the influence of this idea you go out into the hallway to see whether the post has perhaps not already arrived. But it has not. After all, it is still a quarter of an hour earlier than the time at which the postman is due, and the postman is not likely to have been able to increase the speed of his round to this extent, especially since he is hampered by the snow. And even if he does intend to complete his round more quickly than usual, it may be his intention will be frustrated: for the snow is now falling more thickly than ever and the pavement is piled high with it.

No, there is really no question of an early delivery: a delivery at the usual time would be almost a miracle, and the most likely thing is that the post will be late, or perhaps not arrive at all. You resolve to accommodate yourself to this possibility, though you also find yourself listening intently for a sound that might suggest the tumbling of letters on to a mat. A quarter of an hour passes in this way: then, at precisely the time the post usually arrives you hear the click of the flap of the letter-box. You retrieve the post from the floor and search through it for the letter you are waiting for but cannot discover it. The letter has not arrived. "In that case," you say to yourself, "it will arrive tomorrow. Unless it has been mis-addressed and has already arrived somewhere else." You then notice that the letters you are holding in your hand are not intended for you at all but have been delivered to you in error. You open the door in the hope of being able to call back the postman: but the postman, overcome by the intensity of the cold and the crushing weight of his mailbag, is lying dead in the snow.

None of the events, mental or physical, in this anecdote is in any way impossible in the real world: what is, however, very improbable is that they would all take place on the same occasion. You might be awaiting a vitally important letter, but probably it would not be snowing. Letters intended for another address might be mistakenly delivered to you, but probably you would not at that moment be expecting a vitally important letter. A postman might collapse and die, but probably he would not have just delivered to you letters intended for a different address. It is not the events themselves but their juxtaposition which makes the total effect seem unreal.

Here is a recollection of Kafka reported in J. P. Stern's introduction to *The World of Franz Kafka*: "On a rainy day in Marienbad, Kafka watches a famous rabbi, with his solemn entourage in search of medicinal waters after the springs have all been shut for the day, the bottle brought for the purpose meanwhile filling with rainwater—a Marx Brothers scenario which Kafka ends with a comment on one of the rabbi's followers who 'tries to find or find a deeper meaning in all this. I think the deeper meaning is that there is none, and in my opinion that is enough.' Two events—a group of people

trying to find a place open and a bottle filling with rainwater—which taken by themselves possess no "meaning" that goes beyond their plain and apparent meaning seem when they are juxtaposed to acquire some hard-to-grasp, "transcendental" meaning: the total event seems to be "saying something". Kafka, however, denies that it is saying anything at all, and asserts that that is the "deeper meaning" of the event. A step further would be to imagine a series of incidents between which there is no logical connection whatever (e.g. awaiting a vital letter and finding a postman dead) and seeing whether some other kind of connection could not be interpreted into it.

The extent to which the two procedures suggested here are a valid description of Kafka's method must depend on how calculating an artist you think he was. But there is a third procedure, if I can continue to use that word, which was certainly in no way calculated, and in *The World of Franz Kafka* we can see very clearly why.

I entered *The World of Franz Kafka* expecting to find little but praise for him and I was not disappointed: as far as I can see, the only serious adverse criticism is that contained in an extract from Günther Anders's *Kafka: Pro and Contra*, which originally appeared as long ago as 1946. For the most part, Kafka is treated as being self-evidently a "great writer"—and yet his private life is frequently examined and employed in a manner that implies that we cannot understand his writings unless we possess more information than their author has himself supplied.

There are, for instance, repeated allusions to his two engagements to Felice Bauer and to the crises he experienced in connection with them; so much, indeed, has been published on this topic that it could threaten to replace his work as the main source of interest in him, but if the implication is that you cannot understand "The Metamorphosis", *The Trial* or *The Castle* unless you have a fairly detailed knowledge of Kafka's private life, it is either one that has to be denied or constitutes a concealed admission that he was not after all a very successful writer—that his private life is not *außen* in his work, but on the contrary his work is only an aspect of his private life.

The same consideration applies to the much-advertised difficulty Kafka experienced in his relations with his father, to which there is likewise repeated reference in *The World of Franz Kafka*: if it is implied that "The Judgment" is fully understandable only when its text is supplemented with facts from his biography, this must carry the further implication that "The Judgment" is a literary failure.

We do not need Kafka's biography, we need only his texts themselves: to be aware of the "view of life" he wants to transmit, the depressing view that living in the world is such a difficult thing to do that it is almost impossible to do it. But where the biographical essays of the present book can help us in seeing how directly this literary effect corresponds with Kafka's own experience of life.

The view and feeling of life he transmits to the reader is as if he were himself to him. His troubles with his father and with Felice Bauer are evidence of that. So is his famous "perfectionism": his compulsive rewriting of a piece again and again, often employing almost the same words, only in the end to devote himself to a new, and so far as we know, inadequate; and while doing this to declare himself the very embodiment of "literature", the man in whom "the literary life" had become flesh and blood. His actual vocation to which he devoted himself with such single-mindedness, presented him with inordinate difficulty.

There is an illuminating contradiction for if "literature" exists, for which there is no evidence whatever—since if you did you would have to start doing something other than look for it. But never, never can that happen.

time by Froust and Joyce, would barely exist.

It seems to me that this incapacity to find anything simple and easy, to do and have done with it, did not merely enter into Kafka's fictional world but actually created it: it is the bodying forth of his own unconquerable inhibition.

In its typical and characteristic manifestations, Kafka's fictional world is a place where every act is a repetition, more or less disguised, of a previous act: a world in which the inhabitants do only one thing over and over again. The effect can be comic and parodistic, as in the case of the bureaucrats of *The Trial* and *The Castle*, who do nothing, day or night, but produce heaps of official documents which they are too busy adding to ever to read and no particular one of which can ever be found when it is needed: in this and comparable instances the "character" is nothing but his function, which he continues to perform so as to continue to exist. But this parodistic effect is peripheral: the central effect, produced by much more subtle and varied means but essentially the same, is of all life, and in particular the life of the central figure, as a compelled repetition of the same act. The repetition is never greater than when he is fashioning images of frustration: no one who has read it, for instance, is likely to forget "An Imperial Message", with its messenger vainly trying to get out of the imperial palace.

still he is only making his way through the chambers of the innermost palace; never will he get out of them; and if he succeeded in that nothing would be gained; he must fight his way next down the stairs, and if he succeeded in that nothing would be gained; the courts would still have to be crossed; and after the courts the second outer palace; and once more stairs and courts; and so on for thousands of years; and if at last he should burst through the outermost gate—but never, never can that happen—the imperial capital would lie before him, the centre of the world, crammed to bursting with its inhabitants, and he would fight his way through here.

In this parable, the central figure cannot get out of the castle; in *The Castle* the central figure cannot get into it: the reason for their frustration is the same in each case—the distance to be traversed is in practice infinite, so that a step forward is in practice the equivalent of standing still.

Now, I cannot be persuaded to think this way of experiencing life anything but idiosyncratic—for it goes without saying, I hope, that the distance from the centre to the periphery is infinite only if you think so: but it was this idiosyncrasy which produced the "Kafkaesque" world which everyone has come to recognize.

On the following morning you wake up wondering whether the letter will arrive that day. Outside the sun is shining brightly; but will the new postman not perhaps have difficulty in finding his way? Certainly he will be slower than the old postman, who had been doing the same round for years. Probably the post will not be on time. And so on. Subsequently you will try to see the head sorter in an effort to discover the whereabouts of the letter (but will see only his assistant, who will be so busy sorting letters he can hardly spare the time to listen to you); you will visit the house whose number is the number of your house; reversed, in case the letter has been delivered there by mistake and the occupant, Ryhlein B., will act strangely though perhaps not so strangely as all that, you will know what she has in mind, but she will say she hasn't seen your letter; you will do a (potentially) infinite number of things which are all, however, the same thing: pursue of your vitally important letter. Needless to say, you will never get your hands on it—even assuming it exists, for which there is no evidence whatever—since if you did you would have to start doing something other than look for it. But never, never can that happen.

This, in a rendered down, "schematic" form is the "world" of Franz Kafka. I have tried to understand the literary technique which produced it: what cannot be conveyed secondhand, however, is the downbeat quality of the affects which inform it. There is an emotional dreariness about Kafka's novels and stories which makes it almost unbelievable that his interpreters have seen in them valid images of the real human world. The one affect which is gratified at all adequately is cruelty: Kafka is the only imaginative writer I can think of more elevated than a writer of pornography who invents characters in order that they shall be punished and then sides with their punishers. That he probably identifies himself with the victims as well does not improve the picture—quite the contrary.

That he is a very fine writer is perfectly clear and I do not doubt that his style will save him from oblivion: time, which pardons Flaubert for writing well, will do the same for Kafka. But I think the claim implicit in the present volume that he is a great modern master—a status which appears to be accorded him quite generally—needs scrutiny.

His obsession with "literature", to the demands of which he subordinated everything else in his life, has to be judged in the light of the fact that he published only a very small part of what he wrote and failed to put his chief works into publishable form. Publication, however, is a precondition of a "literary life". A dimension which has to be present in any "great writer" is missing in Kafka: outrageousness, the urge to imprint yourself on other people's minds and hearts, at the very least a desire for fame. Kafka wrote almost exclusively for himself: the mere urge to communicate seems to be lacking.

Everyone knows that he left his manuscripts to Max Brod with instructions to destroy them but that Brod says that he had previously told Kafka that if he ever received any such instructions from him he would not carry them out. If this story is accurate in every part, and if Kafka remembered his conversation with Brod, its meaning must be that at the moment of his death Kafka wanted not to know whether or not his life's work would survive him. Leave aside the weirdness of this frame of mind: have you ever heard of any other writer who on the edge of extinction played such tricks with himself? To communicate by writing, not to communicate by keeping hidden what has been written: this indecision was, to the end, final. It is an attitude which, however else it may make a man, does not really make of him a master of the great public art of literature.

Of the individual contributions to this diverse collection, those I profited from most were Allan Blunden's chronology of Kafka's life (in which Mr Blunden defeats this most recalcitrant of literary forms and produces a very readable miniature biography); Thomas Uradillo's recollections of Kafka; Klaus Wagenbach's description of the village and castle of Osek, with its strong corrective to "merely speculative metaphysical interpretations" of *The Castle*; Martin Welser's analysis of Kafka's novels (founded entirely on the texts themselves); Anthony Thorby on "Kafka and Language"; and Joyce Crick on Kafka's first translators.

The most enigmatic contribution is a fragment from Frank Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*. A very brief retelling of and commentary on "Before the Law"—the "parable" inserted into *The Trial* but unfortunately incompatible with the rest of that novel—it ends with the assertion that what is behind the doorway of the Law is "absolutely incomprehensible" to "those outside" it, who, "like K and like us, see an uninterpretable radiance, and a sense which 'purrs' at you." Yes, of course, no doubt about that. On the other hand, though, and in the interest of preserving some sense of what it means to say of a man that he is a writer, one has to add "wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen", so to speak.

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Lessons in futility

By Peter Conrad

KENNETH CHURCHILL:
Italy and English Literature 1764-1930
198pp. Macmillan. £20.
0 333 26444 4

Created by Shelley as the "paradise of exiles", a site of beneficent self-loss for those to whom travel was no longer an outdoor curriculum but a flight into solitude or an experiment in moral dissolution, Italy seems to have been the nineteenth century's California—a realm of sensual health but also (Italy being the open grave of the classical past) of tragic instability. Ironically, in a case of medical need like Keats's—a mere touristic pursuit of good weather. Its motive was more penitential and self-scorching. Journeys were sentences of psychological exile voluntarily undertaken, and setting this mental purgatory in a climatic paradise like Italy only embittered the Romantic artist's isolation from his surroundings. He is inconceivable in the garden of earthly paradise; chafing like Rousseau in the desert, he longs for exiles. Beckett's travel diaries contract Italy into a Pisanian phantasmagoria, a catom of torments (such as he imagines after visiting the prisons in the Ducal Palace in Venice) furnished with the chains, racks, wheels, and dreadful engines which are his own braided and self-torturing thoughts. Entering the amphitheatre in Verona, Beckett at once appropriates it as a mental labyrinth, a cerebral cave in which he is imprisoned alone and from where he watches the last vestige of light fade before he escapes in panic back to the communal comforts of the square.

Beckett's self-induced fear at Verona sums up the motive of Romantic travel: an enforced solitude, an entropic state of motion which never arrives but also (like Childre Harve) of discovering that his grand tour is merely a quest for himself) never leaves home. Those marathon walks of Wordsworth and Coleridge were not explorations of the countryside but the digestive, associative trajectories of thought, monologues of the mind in space. Mme de Staël domineeringly announces the Romantic voyage's solipsistic itinerary in *Corinne*, calling travel "un des plus riches plaisirs de la vie... cette haute pour arriver à la personne en vous attend". The motive of Romantic travel is either dissipated in inconclusive despair, like Frankenstein's quest in the arctic wastes for the monster who is his elusive alter ego, or condemned to eternal repetition, like the Ancient Mariner, cursed circling the world or the promiscuous, indifferent divagations of Byron's Don Juan, for whom travel is cognate with the repetitive routine of sexual conquest, since his eventual fate is to be made love to every woman in the world.

The most interesting perception in Kenneth Churchill's book is his comment that Romantic travel is perpetually impeded, frustrated by

impasses and deferrals which defeat its regenerative aim. Ultimately, travel is only an education in futility. Estranging the self-reliant artist from his fellows and transporting him to the limits of his own capacities, it leaves him looking into graves which seem intended for him: Beckett perturbing his fancies in Venice, Byron souveniring some chunks of granite from the putative tomb of Juliet at Verona, Shelley composing *Prometheus Unbound*—a poem drawing its imagery from the operations of the human mind—in the ruins of the Casaletta. But whose "direst arches" looked like the eroded skull once inhabited by the poem's pantheistic world-mind. The Romantic poets in Italy, as Mr Churchill demonstrates, are Gibbon's heirs, not the proponents of an alternative view. "Musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol," listening to the aural superimposition of two opposed and equally perishable world-orders as "the barefooted friars were singing Vespers in the temple of Jupiter," Gibbon was studying the fragility and decay of civilization. Byron's Childre Harve, who in Italy meditates among the detritus of the past and stands "a ruin amidst ruins," adopts Gibbon's historical law and makes of it a means of self-analysis.

Situated between Gibbon and Byron, an image like Fuseli's of the artist saddened by the grandeur of ancient ruins could be assigned to either period—if to Gibbon's, then Fuseli's artist is hanging his head to mourn the vicissitudes of history, which has spared only this elephantine fragment; if to Byron's then the malady of Fuseli's character is his own creative enfeeblement, his impotence to match the past, and he feels that the crumbling foot is about to obliterate him beneath its weight of precedent. If he is a man of the eighteenth century, he is a historical elegist; if he belongs to the nineteenth century, his mortification is personal and self-accusing.

Samuel Rogers's Italy-passes from one attitude to the next. Italy is history's deposit, and even the stones of the pavement have for Rogers an inanimate eloquence, telling "of past ages". But the garb of masonry, the rhetoric of the past's wreckage, intimidates the poet, who is therefore redundant. In Florence the archaeological palimpsest is the same as the evasive tension within poetic tradition:

"Tis the Past
contending with the Present; and in turn

Each has the mastery.
The past has diminished and dis-
courage the present. Rogers may
as well have said, "Italy is history's
deposit, and even the stones of the
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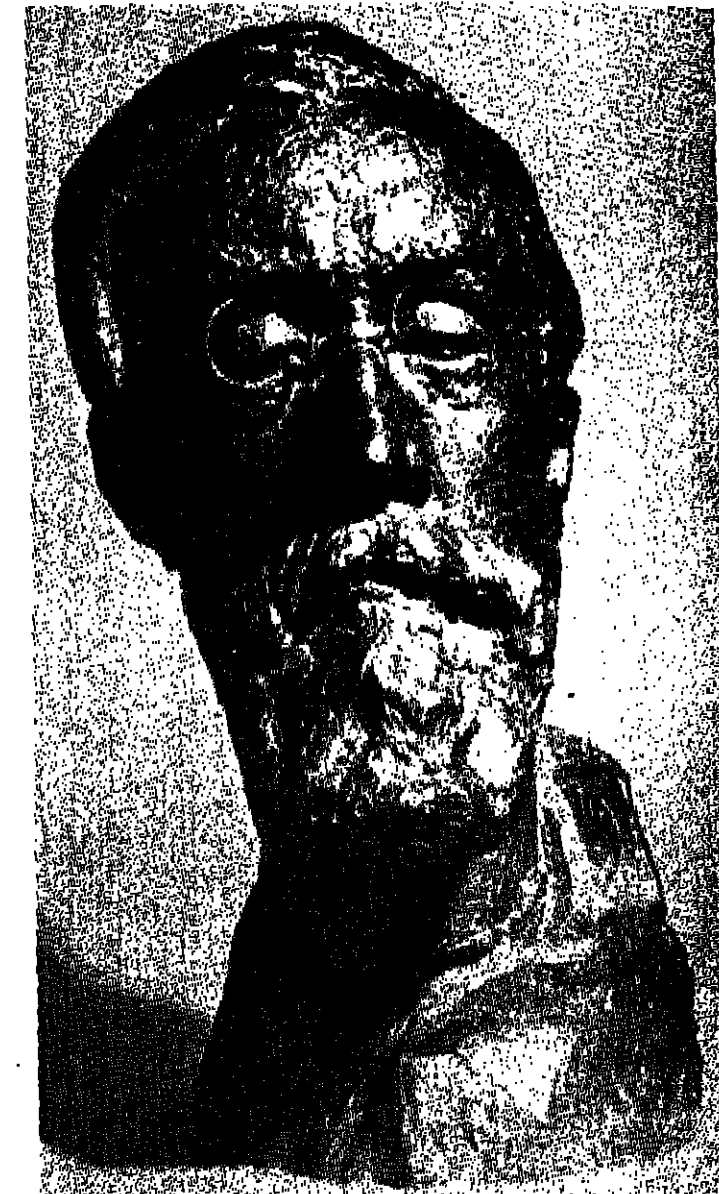
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This bronze portrait of Lytton Strachey by Stephen Tomlin, which was executed circa 1929-30 but not cast from the original plaster until 1973, is included in the sale of modern British and Irish paintings, drawings and sculptures to be held at Christie's, King St, London SW1, on Friday, March 13.

tower or dome from spire only so that in the next line they can be melted down into indivisibility and at the same time reduced to a metaphor—they now "shine like obelisks of fire". The fire generated by the destructive radiance of Shelley's light he calls in this case sacrificial, likening the blaze to burning shrines whose incandescence pierces the dome of gold/Where Apollo spoke of old. The sacrifice is matter's combustible exhalation as spirit.

Light in Shelley, as in Turner, uncreates objects, triumphantly disintegrating matter. In the Italian landscape they found a physical correlative for a visionary process. Disraeli, in *Contarini Fleming*, exclaims: "they found a physical correlative for a visionary process."

"they were/Those famous Egean hills—" after which he at once deprives the object of the physical tenancy he has briefly permitted it by making it another trick of the eye, a delusive metaphoric "like-

ness" which bears
As seen from Lido, through the
harbour piers,
The likeness of a clump of peaked
isles—
where "clump" seems aptly dis-

missive, since if a thing has the
temerity to cling to its material
form it must be rubbishly amor-

phous. The passage concludes with
a Platonic dissolution of the actual
which merges the antagonistic ele-

ments (at the sunset, earth and sea
could be in "one lake of fire") and
vanquishes the world's brutish "lan-

guage" (the sun discharges its "innate
purple spirit of fire") in the
miracled of fission, and succeeds in
rendering the clump-like, resistant
peaks of the hills transparent).

The setting sun "draws Venice,
seeking through mountains and mak-

ing all language a metaphoric mis-

apprehension, a faltering effort to
describe a world which does not
seriously exist; the rising sun—

Shelley's *Lines Written Among the
Euganean Hills*—ignites Venice,
drawing the same dissolution by
purging the world's brutish lan-

guage, tower, and dome, and
spire "blaze and using them to
conduct their chemical heat from
one element to another, between
the altar of dark ocean and
the apocalyptic altar of sun. Func-

tioning the world's brutish lan-

guage, tower, and dome, and
spire "blaze and using them to
conduct their chemical heat from
one element to another, between
the altar of dark ocean and
the apocalyptic altar of sun. Func-

tioning the world's brutish lan-

Gyrations in the wilderness

By David Watt

RICHARD CROSSMAN:
The Backbench Diaries
Edited by Janet Morgan
1,088pp. Hamish Hamilton/Cape.
£15.
0 241 10440 8

The voice—genial arrogance, with a
florid touch of malice—is unmis-
takable:

At the Parliamentary Party this
morning Attlee opened the dis-
cussion on the King's Speech, like
a schoolmasterly bird snapping up
the morsels. What is really sig-
nificant is the cheerfulness and
morale of the Party compared to
its state of serious disintegration
before the election. What a differ-
ence it makes not to be losing
your seat! They are even almost
friendly to the Bevanites out of
sheer general sense of well-being.
Personally I am inclined to regard
this sort of optimism as extremely
complacent. We are in opposition
without any idea of a constructive
socialist policy, and it may be a
great deal more difficult to unseat
the conservatives than many of
my colleagues imagine.

From this start in November
1951, Richard Crossman's *Back-*
bench Diaries set off on the long
trail through the wilderness of
Labour opposition towards the pro-
mised land of office in 1964 when
the *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*
begin. It is immediately apparent
once again that what distinguishes
Crossman from all rivals and imi-
tators is not so much that he gives
more information to the listener, or
that his political observations are
sharper, or even that he possessed
the authentic diarist's mixture of
extreme egocentricity and insatiable
curiosity, though all that is true: it
is that he was, as Janet Morgan
reminds us in her sympathetic Editor's
Introduction, a born teacher. In
the *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*
he was consciously attempting to
illustrate the workings of the
British constitution, whereas in
these earlier journals he was simply
following his nose. But he can
never resist the impulse to expound
and analyse, to seduce by a phrase
or a paradox, even if the audience
was his secretary (to whom most
of these early diaries were dic-
tated) or an unseen posterity. In
this volume, which covers
with only two or three pages
whole periods from Winston
Churchill's triumph in 1951 to Sir
Alec Douglas-Home's defeat in 1964,
there are inevitably moments where
his skill or his vitality flags. But
his candour and his willingness to
judge himself as provocatively and
the force of his personality as strongly
communicated as ever.

Some magnificent scenes are
enacted for us—a parlour game at
Windsor, which results in Sir
Stafford Cripps, Lord Jemay, and
Anthony Eden going stoppings
in front of King George VI and the
princesses with shovels and
spades, as if they were clearing
out his shoulders; Kingsley Martin
and his editorial colleagues agonis-
ing over whether to put a black
band on the *New Statesman* cover
on the King's funeral; Sir Walter
Monckton successfully preventing
the publication of an article entitled
"Harley Shaver's Man or Super-
man?" by Woodrow Wyatt in the
Sunday Express; Harold Wilson
creeping on to the night sleeper at
Euston to enlist Crossman's aid in
persuading Anthony Greenwood to
abandon the challenge to Gaiskell
in 1960 in his favour.

As we know the truth about the
famous libel action in 1957 in which
Bevan, Crossman and Morgan
Phillips collected £2,500 each from
the *Spectator* for its allegation that
they were drunk at a socialist beano
in Venice. (Morgan Phillips, it
appears, was indeed dead drunk and
committed perjury, though the other
two did not.)

We are treated to Crossman's
early chumming on a number of
subsequently well-known characters:
Cecil King, "a Wykehamist, but
otherwise insignificant"; Karl
Miller and Anthony Howard
illustrious men without any strong
views or balance"; the Duke
of Edinburgh, "who may have
trouble with this young man";
John Kennedy, "looked like a
wealthy young man whom George
Leahurst was training as a WEA
lecturer"; Henry Kissinger, "a
rather fat, oily, pompous but nice
American Jew"; and so, traitorous

and anti-American that he even put
me in the shade in the horrible
things he said about his own
country".

Brushing aside this delicious
froth, historians and serious schol-
ars will ask whether the diaries
are likely to be valuable as source
material. The answer is that the
light they throw on the period is
bright but very narrowly focused.
Minister's diaries, unlike the Cabinet
minutes, are almost exclu-
sively concerned with Crossman's
activities as a Member of Parlia-
ment and as a member of the
Labour Party National Executive.
Moreover, they concentrate very
heavily on those few issues on which
the power struggle in the Party
turned.

The period was one of momentous
events. The Korean war, Suez,
Hungary, Algeria, the Wind of
Change, the Cuban missile crisis—
all these make some kind of appear-
ance, if not in Crossman's text then
in Janet Morgan's very compre-
hensive background notes; but since
few of them (with the exception of
Suez) had the slightest effect on the
elaborate gyrations of the
Labour factions, they are for the
most part noticed merely as one
might catch an occasional glimpse
of the passing of time from the
town clock outside the window
during a bar-room brawl.

Even the domestic political scene
—the procession of Conservative
Prime Ministers and Chancellors,
the changes of economic policy, the
bank rate tribunal, and the Profumo
scandal—is usually perceived in the
first instance as consisting not of
people and events in their own right
and with a possibly profound effect
on the well-being or otherwise of
the country, but of bit-players whose
main task is to feed lines to Attlee,
Gaiskell and Crossman, or of situa-
tions devised to illustrate the
strengths and weaknesses of the
stars.

In essence, therefore, the book
is a set of rambling and often bril-
liant variations on two closely
related themes—one the perennial
scrap between the Labour left and
right, and the other the develop-
ment of British defence, and in
particular British nuclear defence,
policy. Yet Crossman's diaries
always had a weakness for political
"cleverness", and after his post-
1960 quarrel with Gaiskell found
himself drawn closer and closer to
Wilson. By 1963 he is writing,
"Harold is the one person closest
to me, the one I get on best with,
the one whose relationships with
me have been tested over twelve
years in rather trying circum-

stances".

It is one of the advantages of the
huge sweep of these diaries that
this kind of juxtaposition is possi-
ble. The overwhelming impression
of the book is how starkly there
is the view of practical politicians. A
single indifferent speech by Gais-
kell in the House is regarded as a
"catastrophe"; a parliamentary
trap "ruins" Churchill, and so
forth. Yet themes recur, not simply
within the book, but between now
and then. Who, without these re-
minders, would recall that Bevan
contemplated starting a breakaway
Labour Party in 1952 (Crossman:
"How many would follow you?
Twenty? I doubt it." Bevan:
"Well, that sort of realism is sheer

"Hugh, firm, obstinate, not very
adroit but keeping his eyes fixed
on his long-term objectives; Nye,
immensely more powerful person-
ally, practically far more skilful,
but completely failing to achieve
his long-term objectives because of
the pendulum-swing of his
emotions".

Gaiskell's relationship to Cross-
man was complicated by the Win-
chester background. "Wig", as
Crossman, "do go on nagging me
in this diary? Partly because these re-
minders, would recall that Bevan
contemplated starting a breakaway
Labour Party in 1952 (Crossman:
"How many would follow you?
Twenty? I doubt it." Bevan:
"Well, that sort of realism is sheer

the bitterness to respect each other
—Crossman because he admired
Gaiskell's intellectual honesty,
Gaiskell because he saw in Cross-
man something missing in his
friends Crosland and Jenkins. Cross-
man quotes a marvellously revealing
remark of Gaiskell's to him on this
subject:
"I am sometimes anxious about
(Roy) and young Tony. We, as
middle class socialists, have got
to have a profound humility.
As for comparisons between the
state of the Labour Party in the
1950s and its present condition, it is
easy enough to see in Crossman the
vindication of the constant refrain
on these diaries as he subsequently
became. Throughout the 1950s, as
much of his thinking and energy was
channelled into his very lucrative
and influential political journalism
in the *Daily Mirror* and the *New
Statesman* as into politics proper,
and because his diaries naturally
tend to omit what he was sure
everyone would have studied closely
in the public prints, they fail to
make his thought processes seem
any less tortuous and glib than his
privileged readers today than they
were to his bemused contemporaries.

With a certain amount of goodwill
(a commodity not freely available in
the 1950s) one can make a good case
for Crossman. He saw himself
throughout the 1950s, and indeed
throughout his ministerial career as
well as a "centrist". He was on the
right wing of the Bevanites and
spent a hair-raising couple of years,
as the diaries show, in trying to
restrain Bevan from getting himself
expelled from the Party. He voted for
Gaiskell in 1955, and though he
sniped a good deal at the "spine-
lessness" of the leadership in his
Mirror column, he worked hard in
preparation for the 1959 election,
especially on his pensions scheme.
He maintained a position on Clause
4 and H-bomb controversies which
he judged was as far to the right as
would keep the Party together (he
happened to be Party Chairman in
1960).

His position on defence was in
fact reasonably consistent once it is
realized that it was all based on
intense fear and animosity towards
the Germans (also one of the main-
springs of his Zionism). He was pre-
pared to support British nuclear
weapons from the start because he
saw that the alternative was a
huge increase in conventional forces,
including the rearmament of Ger-
many. When German rearmament
took place anyway he shifted his
ground and opposed British (though
not American) manufacture of the
H-bomb on the grounds that the ex-
penditure involved would prevent
the proper maintenance of British
conventional forces in Europe—the
only way of keeping the German
army from dominating Nato.

This modified unilateralism, of
course, pleased nobody. The right
regarded it as typical of Dick
Douglas-Crossman; the left accused
him of betrayal. He continued to
believe that the position was intel-
lectually correct, but he was being
one around which the Labour Party
could unite. Crossman once wrote
to Bevan: "I am an intellectual,
which means that though I have
warm personal feelings, my loyalty
is primarily to ideas and to chasing
ideas in argument, which is the
only way I can think." Like many
intellectuals in politics, he felt the
rootlessness and vulnerability of the
pursuit, and clung with all the more
determination to the idea of Party
as the stabilising framework of his
political life. In the 1950s, these
two strands of his personality were
just about compatible, even though
it cost him an ulcer and meant
ending up on the bosom of Harold
Wilson, the only politician who
raised little enough about the issues
to adopt Crossman's stance in a
cynical fashion for Party purposes.
In the Labour Party of the 1980s I
like to think it might have been
another matter.

These are intriguing vistas, but
there is no point in pretending
that the diaries are not more diffi-
cult to read than the Cabinet jour-
nals. It is hard indeed to anatomize
the torments of parliamentary op-
position with all its frustration and
boredom and petty intrigue, without
appearing oneself, from time to
time, boring and petty. Moreover,
diaries dictated to another person,
however broadminded and discreet,
are bound to be more inhibited than
thoughts and incidents confided, as
Crossman's later ones were, to a
tape-recorder.

Then again, the diaries have a
curiously disjointed air about them
—so much so, indeed, that one
sometimes wonders whether Miss
Morgan, who in editing the volume
has once again performed the prodig-
ious labour of reducing three
million words of original text to a
barely manageable million, has left
out key passages of argument by
mistake. But in fact the editing is
in all other respects scrupulous and
encyclopedic. The truth is that
Miss Morgan, who javishes help on
us wherever she can, is also anxious
to hold responsible for an effect which
does something to the peculiar,
stroboscopic quality of the ordinary
backbencher's fragmented existence,
and even more, I believe, to the fact
that Crossman was not as dependent

on these diaries as he subsequently
became. Throughout the 1950s, as
much of his thinking and energy was
channelled into his very lucrative
and influential political journalism
in the *Daily Mirror* and the *New
Statesman* as into politics proper,
and because his diaries naturally
tend to omit what he was sure
everyone would have studied closely
in the public prints, they fail to
make his thought processes seem
any less tortuous and glib than his
privileged readers today than they
were to his bemused contemporaries.

With a certain amount of goodwill
(a commodity not freely available in
the 1950s) one can make a good case
for Crossman. He saw himself
throughout the 1950s, and indeed
throughout his ministerial career as
well as a "centrist". He was on the
right wing of the Bevanites and
spent a hair-raising couple of years,
as the diaries show, in trying to
restrain Bevan from getting himself
expelled from the Party. He voted for
Gaiskell in 1955, and though he
sniped a good deal at the "spine-
lessness" of the leadership in his
Mirror column, he worked hard in
preparation for the 1959 election,
especially on his pensions scheme.
He maintained a position on Clause
4 and H-bomb controversies which
he judged was as far to the right as
would keep the Party together (he
happened to be Party Chairman in
1960).

His position on defence was in
fact reasonably consistent once it is
realized that it was all based on
intense fear and animosity towards
the Germans (also one of the main-
springs of his Zionism). He was pre-
pared to support British nuclear
weapons from the start because he
saw that the alternative was a
huge increase in conventional forces,
including the rearmament of Ger-
many. When German rearmament
took place anyway he shifted his
ground and opposed British (though
not American) manufacture of the
H-bomb on the grounds that the ex-
penditure involved would prevent
the proper maintenance of British
conventional forces in Europe—the
only way of keeping the German
army from dominating Nato.

This modified unilateralism, of
course, pleased nobody. The right
regarded it as typical of Dick
Douglas-Crossman; the left accused
him of betrayal. He continued to
believe that the position was intel-
lectually correct, but he was being
one around which the Labour Party
could unite. Crossman once wrote
to Bevan: "I am an intellectual,
which means that though I have
warm personal feelings, my loyalty
is primarily to ideas and to chasing
ideas in argument, which is the
only way I can think." Like many
intellectuals in politics, he felt the
rootlessness and vulnerability of the
pursuit, and clung with all the more
determination to the idea of Party
as the stabilising framework of his
political life. In the 1950s, these
two strands of his personality were
just about compatible, even though
it cost him an ulcer and meant
ending up on the bosom of Harold
Wilson, the only politician who
raised little enough about the issues
to adopt Crossman's stance in a
cynical fashion for Party purposes.
In the Labour Party of the 1980s I
like to think it might have been
another matter.

These are intriguing vistas, but
there is no point in pretending
that the diaries are not more diffi-
cult to read than the Cabinet jour-
nals. It is hard indeed to anatomize
the torments of parliamentary op-
position with all its frustration and
boredom and petty intrigue, without
appearing oneself, from time to
time, boring and petty. Moreover,
diaries dictated to another person,
however broadminded and discreet,
are bound to be more inhibited than
thoughts and incidents confided, as
Crossman's later ones were, to a
tape-recorder.

Then again, the diaries have a
curiously disjointed air about them
—so much so, indeed, that one
sometimes wonders whether Miss
Morgan, who in editing the volume
has once again performed the prodig-
ious labour of reducing three
million words of original text to a
barely manageable million, has left
out key passages of argument by
mistake. But in fact the editing is
in all other respects scrupulous and
encyclopedic. The truth is that
Miss Morgan, who javishes help on
us wherever she can, is also anxious
to hold responsible for an effect which
does something to the peculiar,
stroboscopic quality of the ordinary
backbencher's fragmented existence,
and even more, I believe, to the fact
that Crossman was not as dependent

on these diaries as he subsequently
became. Throughout the 1950s, as
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channelled into his very lucrative
and influential political journalism
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saw

The way to beauty

By Victoria Glendinning

NORMAN MAILER:
Of Women and Their Elegance
Photographs by Milton H. Greene
287pp. 124 plates. Hodder and
Stoughton. £12.50.
0 340 23920 4

This glossy and seductive publication recharges the batteries of several fantasy love affairs of long standing—between Marilyn Monroe and Norman Mailer, between the photographer Milton Greene and Marilyn Monroe, between Marilyn Monroe and her own image, and between all men and their delicious image of all women, which is often Marilyn Monroe. Mailer's text is a fictional interior monologue: "Perhaps we may call this an imaginary memoir, an as-told-to book, a set of interviews that never took place between Marilyn Monroe and Norman Mailer. It is a book of warring illusions. He writes:

"Marilyn Monroe has been treated with more intimacy than is his right, while, blame Milton's photographs. They tell us so much about women in general and Marilyn in particular that I am encouraged to take these chances with my imagination. After all, the pictures speak of those little mysteries women traverse on their way to beauty, and that as we know is the beginning of all legend.

But between intimacy, or the illusion of intimacy, and legend, there is a black hole, into which Norman Mailer has tumbled. At least I sincerely hope he has.

One of the main preoccupations that he has given Marilyn Monroe is the pursuit of elegance. It is a word that has considerably more meaning and weight in American than in English. Milton Greene's distinguished photographs make her seem very elegant, and very mysterious. The title *Of Women and Their Elegance* is a cover for the fact that this book comprises a portfolio of photographs by Greene of

other women as well as Marilyn—some of them standard fashion shots, but mostly portraits of actresses, as well as one or two street scenes and a still life. As a commentary on the photographs, Mailer's text is inadequate. But one has to make allowances for obsession.

Mailer's Marilyn does not feel she is elegant. She has noticed that men who "read a lot of books" are flattered to be told that they would "really be a tough guy in a rumpus"; similarly, she longs to be told, "Marilyn, you partake of elegance itself," because she feels like a tramp. "I invariably appear," I hate this word—a little vulgar," Milton Greene and his wife Amy—tiny as a nightingale" and indubitably elegant—take her over. Amy takes her shopping in New York. The raw material that is Marilyn is exquisite, but very raw. She has no idea how to dress: "Money may be cabbage, but cleavage is cleavage," is all she knows, or thought she needed to know. It is hard not to feel she is right. Kitchenerless, and exuding rank whiffs of "natural odor" in Saks and Bonwit Teller, in the serious pursuit of elegance, she causes raised eyebrows. So Amy hustles her back to the St Regis Hotel and has the couturier Norman Norelli bring his creations up to them. "Elegance is magic," Norelli helpfully tells Marilyn, and then, behind her back, "Oh! if only she had another inch on her neck!"

Shortnecked but learning fast, Marilyn reads about Josephine Bonaparte, Emma Hamilton, and Mesdames Récamier and de Pompadour, in books supplied by Amy. Unhappily both Rainer of Monaco and Mr Onassis pass her up for other elegant ladies, and it is not until she is in England making The Prince and the Showgirl with Olivier that she comes up against elegance head-on—and hates it. She meets the Queen and Princess Margaret, who do not respond to her sallies. "They looked at me like two turkeys," the text of a dinner party given by the Oliviers. "I decided, is that they let you do the work."

Elegance proves a chimera. At a dinner party given by the Oliviers she thinks she has found it, and

tells Sir Laurence so. No, he says, his environment is just "something you buy off a rack." Really elegant, he whimsically tells her, was the man who used to go into Tortoni's in Paris and order a vanilla ice-cream and a strawberry ice-cream. Then he would "slip the vanilla into the right shoe and the strawberry into the left. Then he would put them on and walk out. Now, that, Marilyn, is elegance." He also told her that elegance was built on the idea that one must choose. "You simply cannot order every dessert." This excites Marilyn very much. "Something in the way he said it had me near to fainting." Meanwhile Arthur Miller, a gaunt shadow in these pages, is becoming bored and jealous.

The point that Mailer, under all the jokes and titillation, may be making is that she had elegance at the time in relation to the camera and to her profession. She is at once, he suggests, the camera's object and the camera's eye, seeing herself being seen. She wants both to be the sexiest girl in the world and an elegant lady. "It's normal to feel two things at once," and one has two souls as one has two parents. If they are not on speaking terms, you break down, as Marilyn did.

Mailer invents a sequence of extravagant, extended and degrading sexual experiences to explain her emotional fragility. But he is too busy indulging himself—being at once Marilyn's lover and Marilyn herself—to do more than sketch the pain. He has her say that she has monthly periods like "national emergencies" because her insides are in tatters after twelve abortions—but "let us not go into that." Quite so: it would make the poor girl too real. This is a fun book. He has her say she mourns her lost babies, and worries whether one of her two personalities is a murderer. But describing her, alone and frightened, looking at her reflection in a mirror in a hotel room like a Jean Rhys heroine, he cannot do better than give her imprecise, symbolic little griefs that do not add up to despair.

His intimacy with her is false and vengeful. It means, for him, dwell-



An unusually composed Marilyn from the book reviewed here.

ing on her sweetly sluttish ways and her genteel aspirations and imagining her—maybe correctly, it doesn't matter—being moiré "turned on" by her own self as they shoot the scene in *The Seven Year Itch* where she stands on a subway grating and her skirt blows over her head.

Marilyn Monroe is a legend because she was—to use a Mailer word—"stellar," and because she died before her star waned. This book, pictures apart, is chiefly about Norman Mailer, even though he does not figure in it. One of

the properties of stars is that their wagons can be hitched to them. What is required to sustain a legend is an image—in this case on the screen, or in a photograph by Milton Greene—of lost perfection: Brightness falls from the air, Queens have died young and fair, Dust hath closed Helen's eyes. . . . "Three cheers for Marilyn, then, three cheers for Helen of Troy," thunders the star-stud—awestruck, where-struck Mailer, black Mailer, male-minute chain-mailed Norman, conversing. Mailer. There's no business like show business.

Coward cabled: "Legitimate at last. Won't Mother be pleased."

Not a bad decade, during which she had also acquired a rich and attractive lover on either side of the Atlantic. If any of those was rendered unacceptable by the Great Crash, her own finances were, though chaotic, still healthy. Even a couple of years later, when she said to Beatrice Lillie that she had taken a house in Berkeley Square, it was still a joke to be told. "Well, you'll just have to put it back again, won't you?"

The 1930s saw her two appearances in and with Coward, which have conditioned our memories of her. First and most important was *Private Lives*, which was thought at the time to be a flimsy affair, kept afloat by the personalities of the stars for whom it was written. There is a rumour that a rough film was made of the original production by the Hollywood studio that had bought the rights and wanted to see what they had got; but Mr Morley does not mention it. Tonight at Eight Thirty, six years later, was a comparable peak and an astonishing feat in that she and Coward, who might have seemed

limited to one manner of playing danced, sang and acted in many different accents and moods in nine plays, three of which were performed each night. But it is Amanda standing in a white dress in the cruelly deceptive moonlight, that we know, remember and want.

There were triumphs to come—*Nymph Errand*, *Lady in the Dark*—but the second half of her life is inevitably the everyday story of showbiz folk. *Other People*, indeed, really was generous to a fault and, as a whole, an entire fleet of drunken sailors, but her resulting money troubles are not very interesting. Middle-age is faced and skillfully handled, a husband can put up with her as found and usually more generous with adulation and when the British supply seemed low she left, only playing once in London after 1936 and then in a contrived drama, *September Tide*, in America she toured tensely and appeared mainly in revivals, notably *Pygmalion*.

Mr Morley, perhaps wisely, does not milk the last scene for all it is worth. Gertrude Lawrence comes to the end of her career, and as it became the most expansive Rogers and Hammerstein musical to date, failed to do so. The heavy curbed extensions must be shoes, those trolleys cars, those crucifixes planes, those white creatures (and later, for they are a recurrent image, "bloated nursery toys" and "fat white layabouts") and "ghosts of . . . clouds." And so it goes on, never again quite so bewitchingly as in the first chapter. The "dirty sheets of amused grey paper that came and went every day" with men on its back pages costing lots of money, is a tabloid newspaper, knitting needles in a restaurant are chopsticks; a "glittering, dumbbell" proves to be the receiver of a phone.

That last image might come from Christopher Reid's poem "Baldness" where passages read like prose: "Grats" for the "Yellow

MARTIN AMIS:
Other People
224pp. Cape. £5.95.
0 224 01768 7

We knew where we were with Martin Amis's fiction, or thought we did. Black humour, metropolitan satire, Swiftian obsession with the bodily functions—with three novels and a handful of short stories the boundaries of his fictional world looked to have been decisively drawn. But where are we now? A young woman wakes in an institution of some kind. She walks down its corridors with "heavy curved extensions" attached to her feet. She watches packs of "trolleys" charging noisily along the streets. She classifies people, bizarrely and it seems arbitrarily, into six different kinds. She gazes upwards at "extravagantly lovely white creatures—fat, sleepy things" and "slow-moving crucifixes." She feels to be on the verge of some "inscrutable, ecstatic human action." She appears to have lost her bearings; and so have we.

Other People is subtitled "A Mystery Story" and like most mystery stories withholds its chief secret until the end. But one of its mysteries—Martin Amis's change of style, and the resources he draws on in order to bring it about—is to be solved by looking not at the last page but at the back cover. This shows the author sitting, cigarette in hand, reading what we can just about make out to be the *New Statesman*, a magazine of which he was once the literary editor (and he's the arts pages' persister), but which he left in order to write full-time. The photograph is perhaps a way of reminding cognoscenti that one of Amis's achievements on that paper was to give some prominence to a poetry which specialises in presenting the familiar world through the eyes of a fascinated, almost obsessive, observer with Craig Raine, Christopher Reid and others which has since been given the name "Martian." *Other People* is a Martian novel—not the first perhaps (William Golding's *The Inheritors* and a host of science fiction novels have prior claims) and not the whole way through but an extent that suggests he has adopted some of the techniques of recent poetry for his own ends (the fact that his name is an anagram of "Martianism" may not be entirely beside the point).

Amis is a self-confessed raider of others' texts, and makes no attempt to conceal the borrowings (especially those from his contemporary poet, C. P. Cavendish) in the shift in mode from the first to the second chapter, explicitly draws attention to. "Between ourselves, this isn't my style at all really. The choice wasn't truly mine, although I naturally exercise a degree of control. It had to be like this," she asked for it. "She" is the heroine, Mary Lavin, who—as the voice also tells us at this point—appears to be going through an experience not unlike amnesia. She is also, it seems, suffering from nominal aphasia, a complaint which afflicts George Zeyer in Kingsley Amis's *Ending Up* and which is defined there as "that condition in which the sufferer finds it difficult to remember nouns, common terms, the names of familiar objects." For Mary, innocent as her name suggests, the world is a riddle, and we are forced to do a certain amount of decoding on her behalf. Those heavy curbed extensions must be shoes, those trolleys cars, those crucifixes planes, those white creatures (and later, for they are a recurrent image, "bloated nursery toys" and "fat white layabouts") and "ghosts of . . . clouds." And so it goes on, never again quite so bewitchingly as in the first chapter. The "dirty sheets of amused grey paper that came and went every day" with men on its back pages costing lots of money, is a tabloid newspaper, knitting needles in a restaurant are chopsticks; a "glittering, dumbbell" proves to be the receiver of a phone.

That last image might come from Christopher Reid's poem "Baldness" where passages read like prose: "Grats" for the "Yellow

Pages" section of Craig Raine's *The Onion, Memory*.

She thought about the jobs she had seen other people doing, and the special kinds of time they had to sell. They were all the masters of their conspiratorial skills. The grocer with his lumpy racks, the adroit swivel of his paper bag, the jerking centripetal apparatus that dealt him money; but he had food to sell (layered like ammunition in a cave), as well as time. The bus-conductor, clambering through the day with his expert handhold, yelling news about his progress, unweaving his costly paper from the machine beside his moneybag; but as well as time he had the bus he shared with the man in front, and the travel they sold. Who paid the newspaper for his buckled back, the gladiatorial dustmen with their poles and shields, the policeman and his lucrative swagger? . . . When she walked the streets Mary often looked up at the spangled canyons and saw with a sense of gleeful exclusion the people there behind the high windows, all intent about the sky's business.

The proliferation of correspondences, of everything looking like something else, reinforces the novel's main theme, which is Mary's search for her double, the person she perfectly resembles, the lost self of a former life. The search begins in the lower levels of society, where Mary is befriended by an alcoholic half-tramp, half-prostitute, Sharon, who takes her money, cleans her up and pairs her off with Trev, whose speciality is sex with violence ("His two tongues wined her two mouths. I can bear this," she thought; but there was more. . .). Mary batters his face with a brick, runs for it, and hides out with Sharon's alcoholic parents, Mr and Mrs Boleyn, who allow her to go about educating herself in the streets. She explores her body ("the seven rivers, the four forests, the atonal music of her insides"), reads Shakespeare and Jane Austen, gets to know London. The idyll ends when she comes for his revenge: he is repelled. But the process, Mr Boleyn's back is broken and Mary has to move on.

Breakage is a dominant motif in the novel and wherever Mary goes she leaves a trail of destruction behind her: broken backs, broken jaws, broken noses, broken necks, broken spirits, broken hearts. Her next home is a hotel for girls who, as we are told, were gone out too deep to remember the name. Stevie Smith's poem "No Waving But Drowning", with its line "I was much too far out all my life", Mary stays there long enough to find a job as washer-up in a café and then moves into a squat "square where the police house where poor people come and live when the rich people aren't looking" with two men from work. Russ and Alan are a re-working of Gregory and Terry in *Success*. Russ is slim, loose, sipping and in some of the novel's funniest scenes fantasises about his peremptory removal of famous film actresses ("Guess whose turn it was for the chop this time? Ekberg"). Alan is pale, frightened and prone to wrench fistfuls of hair from his scalp, thus adding to an already serious baldness problem. Here are the classic qualities of Martin Amis's fiction: buoyant self-assurance as against self-loathing, preening, arching, craning and gliding as against whimpering, whinging, fawning and breaking down. But, as in *Success*, the gap between the two gradually narrows: Russ is hung up about being illiterate; it is Alan who manages to sleep with Mary; and the rivalry of the two men proves to be a form of mutual dependence, a desperate double act.

Mary's search for her own double is meaningless gooseciding. Through the mysterious policeman Prince, who is called in on each of her various misadventures, she learns about Amy Elide, a girl whose disappearance has led to a man being held on a murder charge. Is Mary herself Amy Elide? At the end of the novel, she discovers that she resembles yet another girl, Baby, Amy's sister; and later to an old boyfriend of Amy's, now a television star, and one of the few easy targets in the novel. If the novel, Prince, though that Mary depends

In the astronomical present

By Blake Morrison

for her ultimate revelation, and with whom she is paired in yet another strange Doppelgänger. "I thought only boys' dogs were called Prince", someone remarks, but the name also suggests nobility and perhaps deliverance; and Mary herself according to Russ "talks like a fuckin' princess". Conversations between the prince and princess are full of misunderstandings, but also have metaphysical overtones: "Yes, I went there." "Any joy?" "No, it was very sad." "It didn't take you back." "No, I'm still here." "I just want to show you the lights, that all." "What sights?" "You'll see."

Before she meets her destiny, however, Mary has one more strange experience to go through. She moves in with Jamie, who's rich, attractive and already has three girls in his flat, maybe four ("Perhaps Augusta was two girls too. . . . Augusta's real name was Janice"). These new flatmates are leashed enough not to have to work ("They did things, but they didn't do anything") and as they move about the "bob", a synonym for self-confidence in Martin Amis's vocabulary. But when Mary and Jamie are left alone together at Christmas, they let the place run down (there are echoes here of Ian McEwan's *The Cement Garden*). A Gothic meal that follows Mary prepares supper, cooking a "murdered" (supermarket) chicken, but failing to remove the innards: to Jamie it looks like "Ken's last cough", but he eats it none the less—as he does, also, the even more abominable meals that follow. This is the grand bouffon within the grand guignol. The scenes are full of blood and gore, and we anticipate that Mary's fate will be similar.

Though it has its twits and surprises to the end, the plot of *Other People* is somewhat perfunctory. Consider its history through a three-part structure and through the aggressive two-word chapter headings ("Don't Break", "No Need", "Last Things" and so on), but there is none of the tightness and narra-

tive subtlety of *Success*. Interest is concentrated, instead, on the play-off of two narrative voices: one knowing, the other unknowing. The latter is Mary's or something like it, bemused by "the astronomical present". The identity of the second voice remains a puzzle until the final pages, and is indeed the novel's chief thriller element. Snappy and snappish, this voice hectors the reader, corrects misapprehensions, parades its familiarity with the ways of the world. At times it seems to be an authorial voice, exulting, in self-conscious post-modern fashion, in its omniscience and control. At other times we suspect that it must belong to the person at the heart of the novel's crime mystery. These impressions are perfectly compatible, of course, both people may be said to control Mary's outcome; both have the power to kill her off.

There is in the end no single answer to this novel's mystery, but if there were it might be simply: literature. *Other People* leaves a trail of literary references and clues. There are no prizes for spotting that the unidentified passage which Jamie approvingly reads out is from *Lolita*; but this is not merely another example of Martin Amis expressing his admiration for Nabokov, it is also a hint that there are connections between the paedophile Humbert and the last page of *Other People*. Yet Nabokov is perhaps less of an influence on the novel than is Joseph Heller. The scenes in which Prince takes Mary on a nocturnal trip through London ("Life nearly overloaded Mary that night") are strongly reminiscent of Yossarian's last trek through the night of Rome, though filtered, perhaps, through Martin Scorsese's *Film Taxi Driver*. There is also a more general debt to the inversions, paradoxes and logical illogic of *Catch-22* and *Good as Gold*: the girls at the hotel are admitted if they are in trouble and are made to leave if they are in trouble; in order to increase through a three-part structure and through the aggressive two-word chapter headings ("Don't Break", "No Need", "Last Things" and so on), but there is none of the tightness and narra-

fiction aspires to a kind of poetry—indeed two of the above aphorisms were first printed as part of a poem. And he also draws on other poets a good deal: there are "skunk hours" by courtesy of Robert Lowell, and in the climactic scene, when Mary thinks "Oh father . . . my mouth is full of stars", we get a straight lift from Charles Causley's "Song of a Dying Gunner AA 1" ("Oh mother my mouth is full of stars"). "Reading might hold the key to any order the world disclosed," Mary decides; and Martin Amis's own reading of "other people" is a key to this novel.

Weaknesses remain, many of them legacies of an earlier style. The various lists in the book have an air of Christmas competition-setting smart-aleckery. "She read The Nice and the Good, The Long and the Tall, The Quick and the Dead, The Beautiful and Damned"; a good many of the epigrams look clichéd, crass or soft-convicted ("It is harder being yourself than it is being drunk"). "Don't eat fear soup. Send it back." "Love is only the most you can feel, that's all love is"; and the view of women promulgated in the novel is not calculated to win Martin Amis many feminist friends ("How shameful, really, that when women tried to be free of men and strong in themselves, they just watched the way men were strong and copied that"). It must be said, moreover, that *Other People* is not halfway as funny as Martin Amis's previous books. But it has the look of a novel that is opening up new possibilities for its author. The famous "Anxiety Top Ten" of *The Rachel Papers* gives way here to a redefinition of the Seven Deadly Sins ("venality, paranoia, insecurity, enigma, irrationality, contempt, boredom") and the change seems symptomatic of a shift from contemporary satire to the contemplation of more universal verities. In an unprogrammatic way the novel explores notions of time, identity and self-responsibility; and creates its own bleak universe in which lost souls wander vainly in search of the perfect match, the "other people" who might make them whole.

Escaping from love

By Mark Abley

RUUDOLF NASSAUER:
Reparations
255pp. Cape. £6.50.
0 224 01862 5

It is rare to find a novel that suffers from it: brevity, but Rudolf Nassauer's *Reparations* might well have been a hundred pages longer. Compressing forty years and as many characters into three curt sections, it explores the peasant's search for his identity through the survivors among a family of wealthy Frankfurt Jews. Hermann Mann and Nathaniel Becker are cousins, friends and business partners, and in spite of the venom directed at their shared past, they refuse to leave Germany. Even after Nathaniel has died of a stroke and his firm is in Alan's hands, Hermann lingers on. In 1940 his wife and son manage to escape to Switzerland, through occupied France, but Hermann stays on at a border-post so that his family can scurry past unnoticed. "When our fathers die," Nassauer reflects, "we inherit them, the twitch in their cheek, the poles of their bodies, the detestable which is hidden in us until we take over."

For Hermann's son Toby, growing effortlessly into marriage, manhood and a profitable career in England, the past is another country. But its demands cannot be resisted forever: Toby knows that as long as he remains an enemy to his father's past he will be a failure. The need to recapture his history and the buried self of childhood spurs him to desert his wife, and to establish business in a ruined Frankfurt whose every street, recalls its humiliation. As Nassauer writes in each of the sections, "In a Grey Room at Dawn",

"To escape from love is valid preaching. . . but escape is a return we have wished for." Once he has returned, however, Toby finds that he can expiate his past only by avenging it.

Regardless of incidental felicities, the novel sands off fairly by its central conceit: that Toby and his cousin Julius nourish such a fastidious hatred of Germany that they are prepared to spend their adult lives there, ruthless and successful, waiting for a moment of revenge. Their wealth brings little pleasure; they are a cruel nation that has as cruelly wounded them. The revenge takes shape in 1969, when they begin to finance the Baader-Meinhof gang, in the hope that terrorism will cripple a people who have, Toby thinks, not even begun to repay the damage of the Holocaust. Unfortunately, Nassauer concentrates so hard on dovetailing fact into fiction that his final chapters are starved of character and emotion. The structure of *Reparations* seems extraordinary here, for the author (never exactly loquacious) rapidly becomes perfunctory, as if he had grown weary of his story.

Throughout the book Nassauer takes pains to ensure that the narrative keeps its distance from the reader. If the tone of clinical omniscience is varied by such throwaway lines as "it is impossible to describe exactly what Hermann felt at this moment," the feeling of detachment remains constant. Nassauer rarely permits us to linger in the minds of his characters, and never in their bodies; probing, commenting, explaining, he gives us small opportunities to feel. The surface of the book is cluttered with names, places and events, and in the odd moments when a dream intrudes upon the relentless plot one has the peculiar sensation that a potentially distinguished novel has been encased within an inappropriate concept, a mistaken form. The pearls

tearfulness of style seems at odds with the requirements of character and plot. *Reparations* depends upon the inner fire of Toby Mann and Julius Becker, but only in a few dreams does any inner life show through. Nassauer, better at working out a plot than at creating a scene, seldom rises to much degree of passion (there is one dreadful love-scene); under that cool scrutiny, Toby becomes as much an object as the gold pencil in his father's waistcoat.

The deepest alienation examined in the book is that of language. When Toby has just returned from England to Frankfurt, "he suddenly felt that if one language in him should ever war with another, German would win." *Reparations* echoes with such bitter wars, for in marrying an English woman Toby was merely following the practice of his father, whose wife and mistress had both been English. Toby's second wife is French and of his first wife the author says: "Embedded in him was a language she could never hear or speak." This language does not consist simply of words; Nassauer defines it as "all those givers of experience which feed us when our own perceptions of knowledge until the day we discover the pattern of our hunger." Toby and Julius think of themselves as Jews first and foremost, but they are also Germans, and in their vengeance they deny parts of themselves.

Reparations contains many acute observations of motive and excuse; it is, however, better planned than imagined. Nassauer's adroit evocation of Germany in the 1930s is not matched by any of the scenes in post-war London or Frankfurt, and the final chapters stretch credulity on the rack of a scheme. One misses, in the end, a richness of character and language; it is as though the novel has been written in too dispassionate a tongue.

The career of glamour

By Mark Amory

SHERIDAN MORLEY:
Gertrude Lawrence
227pp. Widenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.
0 297 77882 X

Charm is what Gertrude Lawrence must have had, any amount of charm, great generosity, some courage and not much else. Many people can be charming at night, that they are witty and intelligent and that any little faults should be overlooked; she could persuade whole audiences that she was beautiful, that she was not singing flat and that if she was over-acting then over-acting was what they had paid to watch. This girl carried her to the height of her profession and, just, kept her there.

But charm can only be experienced in the original. Her recordings and a few bad films are all that remain to hint at why she was a great star. Words like "shimmering" and "glittering" make claims, but do not really convey what was special about her. That there was something can be deduced from this book. Whenever Gertrude Lawrence is quoted exactly, the sounds banal and affected; yet everyone rushed to her bidding, sent her flowers, paid her into new plays. This sets Sheridan Morley a problem which he has solved adroitly. Centre-stage may be held by some who, on a page is less than thrilling, but the supporting players are strongly cast. Her friends provide the wit and colour, she provides the plot.

The first and best of these friends is Noel Coward. They met as fellow professionals in 1911 when she was 26 and he a year younger. But Coward's "comments on even earlier years, as he came to the same, drab middle-class London background." It didn't glow Kipper's heads in the gutter as Gertrude Lawrence quite untrifflingly

always insisted that she did. But not was our first memory the crunch of carriage wheels in the drive. Because neither of our families had drives. Unlike Coward she was ashamed of her background and ignored or romanticized it later. After only three years of small parts and understudies in touring shows, she was summoned to the West End by André Charlot, the reigning king of intimate revue, the reigning king of intimate revue, the reigning king of intimate revue, and Beatrice Lillie was the star of some and decently pretended to be ill so as to give Gertrude Lawrence a chance; but only for one night. A year later, in 1917, she really did have a riding accident and her new friend had two months to establish herself before she received a message "I don't know about the horse but I'm fit to work again."

Gertrude Lawrence's career was now properly launched and it faltered from time to time she had only herself to blame: she was often unprofessional, fooling around and changing her performance every night out of boredom. An undisciplined social snob, who thought poets good and royalty better, she gave as much attention

to social climbing as to work. She also went for dismal practical jokes such as stuffing syringes with jam or sewing up coat-lapels at the cuff. Marriage to a talent scout did not fit in with her glamorous new world and she added two more items to the list of things she could not manage: she was a rotten wife and mother. Her daughter, remarkably unembittered, comments: "It wasn't really that my mother intended to be unkind or difficult; it was just that she could never discover precisely what a mother was supposed to do. Our relationship was a disaster."

Though her name is more closely associated with Noel Coward, she rose to fame with Beatrice Lillie and Jack Buchanan, with whom she sang "Limehouse Blues" in 1921. In 1923 she had a success with "Parisian Plerro" in Coward's *London Calling* and when Charlot took Lawrence, Lillie and Buchanan to New York, they triumphed there too. In 1926 she moved on to musical comedy with George and Ira Gershwin's *Oh, Kay!* in which she sang "Someone to Watch Over Me", and in 1929 she succeeded in a straight play, *Candle-Light*.

Gruppenbild ohne Dame

1923, gathering Depression. In this interior in Cologne, it's Loebson all over again. This time, Fate has left him his two boys and taken his wife. . . . Though it is difficult to see how a woman could have fitted in, here is a road winding in an empty landscape on the wall, the threshold carpet, and one hard Sunday chair. A male Trinity, the Father and his two Sons. The maculate conceptions of his bald head. Baby watch-chains like Papa's, and knickerbockers aspiring to the condition of his three-piece suit. Her knobby skulls show of family likeness. Heads shaved for lice and sunburn—skinny boys with their mother's big eyes and hurt mouth.

Michael Hofmann

An absence of abstraction

By Phyllis Grosskurth

MARY MCCARTHY:
Ideas and the Novel
121pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£4.95.
0 297 77896 X

Ideas and the Novel contains Mary McCarthy's Northcliffe Lectures, delivered at University College London last year. If one actually goes to hear such lectures one can savour the wit, the promediated pauses, and the charm of the speaker. If one loses the chain of associations, it is almost always because one's own attention has wandered momentarily. To read rather than to listen to them is to lose the immediacy of the speaker's presence, but also to gain the time to ponder the force and plausibility of a particular argument. *Ideas and the Novel*—covering as it does a wide spectrum both of novels and historical periods—is far too compressed to make a satisfactory book. To have heard the lectures must have been provocative and entertaining; to read them is to be irritated and bewildered.

"He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it," T. S. Eliot's ambiguous remark about Henry James was itself a dramatic and arresting opening to a lecture, and it might have been interesting to know what Miss McCarthy believed Eliot meant by this statement. It would be far more interesting to know what she has in mind when she uses the capacious word "idea" herself and, more precisely, what she means by "ideas" in the novel. Is she talking about ideological convictions, debating points, attitudes to life, obsessions, abstractions, or beliefs that inspire people to action or destruction? Although she repeatedly tells us that ideas are no longer accepted in the modern novel—a fact she seems to lament—she never tells us what we have lost or what we now have in its place.

James, she seems to assume at the outset, is responsible for this disappearance of ideas, yet within a few pages a generalization seems to have been at work as well. McCarthy supposes that "the present predicament is a heritage from modernism in its prim anti-Victorian age". Ah, now perhaps we are getting somewhere. Virginia Woolf, for instance, deliberately set out to see what could be discarded from the novel—but that is all we hear about Virginia Woolf. Miss McCarthy is now galloping off across country, looking off grapes, rather aimlessly at whatever Victorian novelist comes within range. The Victorians filled their books with descriptions of people, places, and things; they were, in fact, repositories of information.

And ideas? Well, Miss McCarthy herself seems to grow a little uneasy that she may have stumbled too far into the past because at this point she admits that she took down her *Reader's Guide to Literary Terms* and looked up the entry for "novel". She reads that: "In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries the novel, as an art form, has reached its fullest development." (Her only quibble here is that Plautus should not be included because he died in 1880.) It now appears that we are getting somewhere, as she posits a number of possibilities as to what the novel of ideas is, the *Reader's Guide* lacking any reference to it. (Plautus was, it appears, a passing moment of pique.) "Does it mean a novel in which the characters sit around, or pace up and down, enunciating and discussing ideas? This type of novel was included in *The Mountaintop*, all of Aldous Huxley, and the fiction of Sartre and Malraux. All these writers are post-James so perhaps Miss McCarthy is now going to tell us that what they wrote are not really novels of ideas after all, before we reach this point. However, we are told that these novels involve isolated situations in which the characters have the opportunity to talk, even if nothing is ever resolved. Disposing of these books by implication, she continues: "Still, when the novel of ideas is spoken of, maybe another type of story is being referred to—a story that does come to some sort of resolution."

Why the passive tense? Miss McCarthy has given us to understand that she was going to be out

guide, and one begins to wonder if we are lost in a jungle rather than a mere forest. Not unnaturally she now invokes the name of D. H. Lawrence. He had ideas, no doubt about that, particularly in *Kangaroo*. But he must be rejected because he "could only associate, finally, with people who shared his ideas, which was bound to mean in practice people who consented to have his ideas of their own". Be that as it may, Miss McCarthy seems to have forgotten that in her opening remarks she attributed the death of ideas in the novel to James, who was considerably older than Lawrence.

In her second chapter (or lecture) Miss McCarthy, assuming now that ideas were the staple of nineteenth-century fiction, discusses how they are expressed either through a particular character detached from the author (Balzac and Lucien de Rubempré, for example), or divided between character and author (Stendhal in *The Red and the Black*). Finally, she talks about the dangerous ideas that authors such as Flaubert were aware of disseminating in their novels—such as the disastrous effect of romantic fiction on Emma Bovary. Novels of ideas—whatever they are—are not always a good thing.

But hope should not be abandoned. There are novels in which certain characters are ruled by ideas—Julien Sorel in *The Red and the Black* is obsessed by the idea of Napoleon, which ultimately leads to his downfall. But nineteenth-century England has nothing to match this, though *Dombey and Son*—which Miss McCarthy reads "as a parable of Empire"—perhaps comes nearest to it. She then makes an extraordinary statement: "Victorian fiction, generally, seems to have missed out through insularity, which was a side-benefit of Empire, on the shaking experience of the century: the fact of seeing an idea on the march and being unable to forget it—radiant vision or atrocious spectacle, depending on your point of view."

English fiction missed out on the ultimate novel of ideas, as practiced by Dostoevsky, which Miss McCarthy now devotes her full attention: *Crime and Punishment* and *The Possessed*. She describes at great length what happens in these novels, in which characters are "incarnate ideas". Verhovensky in *The Possessed* is the driving force behind the destructiveness of the novel—but that is all we hear about Virginia Woolf. Miss McCarthy is now galloping off across country, looking off grapes, rather aimlessly at whatever Victorian novelist comes within range. The Victorians filled their books with descriptions of people, places, and things; they were, in fact, repositories of information.

By R. V. Holdsworth

NICHOLAS GRENE:
Shakespeare, Jonson, Molière
The Comic Contract
246pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 333 23308 5

As an essay on the variousness of comedy, its refusal to be the prisoner of any single theory of its form (whether Meredith's, Bergson's, or Northrop Frye's), this book succeeds very well. Nicholas Grene takes sixteen comedies by the three major comic dramatists of the seventeenth century, Shakespeare, Jonson, and Molière, an extended and non-partisan comparison of whom has been long overdue. He fits his texts into suggestive pairings without suppressing their distinctness, and identifies a wide range of comic patterns, not only of form and style, but others more problematic in the limits of comedy seem to be reached or crossed. His separate readings are usually convincing, if not always unfamiliar. Particularly good are those of *Le Malin Imaginaire*, where the full irony of the tubercular Molière's perspective is made clear, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, where Theaetetus and Prospero are compared as "comic controllers". Others are more doubtful. I do not believe that *Measure for Measure* is a play in which sex is seen and felt as an end in itself, or that in *Richard III* Jonson "asks us to share the stance of the gentleman wits" (they are surely sneering, dandified elders, examples of what William Empson

which ensues from ideas, but "if he is an idea, which I wonder about, it is an idea without specific content, a principle devoted (but not dedicated) to destruction". Sadly, this is the closest we are going to come in these lectures to a genuine novel of ideas, with the exception of *Hard Times*, which is ultimately rejected because "the nature of an idea, surely, is to be abstract, the polar opposite of the concrete, of the plurality of facts, living and dead, each different from the next, that the world consists of."

The conclusion is that novelists are now afraid to have ideas, or that if they do attempt to have them, they are jeered at. Solzhenitsyn is declared by the critics to be backward, and Iris Murdoch is accused of "deliberate archaizing". (Surely the admirers of Solzhenitsyn and Murdoch far outnumber their detractors.) I wish that Miss McCarthy had analysed a typical modern novel to show us just how it has been void of ideas—but, in her concluding remarks, it appears that all the time she has been talking about the English novel because "in the USA, a special license has always been granted to the Jewish novel, which is free to juggle ideas in full view of the public". Well, Malraux, Philip Roth still avail themselves of the right, which is never conceded to us boys". Does she mean that Jewish reviewers are in conspiracy against non-Jewish writers who have the temerity to incorporate ideas into their novels? The only non-Jewish writer who appears to have got away with it is Robert Pirsig in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, whose title disguises the fact that his book was really a novel all the time. Miss McCarthy concludes: "If the novel is to be revitalized, maybe more such emergency strategies will have to be employed to disarm and disorient reviewers and teachers of literature, who, as always, are the reader's main foe." I understand that this ringing finale evoked thunderous applause at the time, but for the life of me I cannot understand why.

Ideas and the Novel is a gallimaufry of prejudices, vicissitudes, and heresies. It addresses me to see Miss McCarthy waste her fine mind on a tattered rag-bag of undeveloped impressions. Some novelists make good theorists but quite clearly Miss McCarthy is not one of them; she should get on with writing good novels.

English fiction missed out on the ultimate novel of ideas, as practiced by Dostoevsky, which Miss McCarthy now devotes her full attention: *Crime and Punishment* and *The Possessed*. She describes at great length what happens in these novels, in which characters are "incarnate ideas". Verhovensky in *The Possessed* is the driving force behind the destructiveness of the novel—but that is all we hear about Virginia Woolf. Miss McCarthy is now galloping off across country, looking off grapes, rather aimlessly at whatever Victorian novelist comes within range. The Victorians filled their books with descriptions of people, places, and things; they were, in fact, repositories of information.

calls Jonson's readiness, when it suited him, to be anti-cavalier and to be a working-class point of view"; and to suggest that we are not meant to sympathize with the humiliated Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost* because at this time Londoners liked watching animals being tormented is very crude. As a study of comic "contracts", the means by which the dramatist seeks to guide his audience's reading of his comedy, the book is altogether less successful. Grene seems only intermittently aware that this is his main subject, sticking more often to general discussions of themes and characters, and ignoring completely many crucial problems, particularly as regards Jonson, whose comedies are more devious, coercive, and hostile than Dr. Grene's. There are also some serious misinterpretations. In the prologue to *Every Man in His Humour*, for example, where Jonson declares "there's hope left then/You that have no grace/monsters may like me", the lines are wrongly assumed to be a sort of "contract" in which Jonson is saying having watched the monstrous fool in his play, you may be more civilized in the future. The actual meaning is "despite the fact that you're so disposed to chase vulgar rubbish of my rivals, there's some hope (not much) that you may enjoy the true image of human behaviour in my (unfinitely better) play. No, my laugh-a-contract as a farcical agent."



Self-portrait at 51, by Leonard Buskin, from an exhibition of his graphics, drawings and sculptures at the Cottage Gallery, 9 Herford Road, London W2, until March 21.

Author, Author

Competition No 53

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than Friday, March 27. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that the nearest correct—in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed to the Editor, The Times Literary Supplement, PO Box 7, 200 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ, and marked "Author, Author" on the envelope. The question and result will appear in our issue of April 3.

The third quotation is a translation. 1. James R—, sitting on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy Stores, endowed the picture of a refrigerator as his mother spoke with heavenly bliss. It was fringed with joy.

2 Official orders are not clearly expressed. One may mention Harrods, but not Derry and Toms; One may write of mist but may not write of rain.

Japanese scribbled on thin paper in faint scrawl tires the eyes to read. In a small room with ten telephones And a tape-machine concentration is hard. Yet the Blue Pencil is a mere toy to wield. There are worse knots than tangles of Red Tape.

3 I can imagine someone thinking that this games "Forum" and "Mason" fitted each other.

Result of Competition No 52 Winner A. W. Holden, 58 Willow Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire.

Answers: 1. *Funniest*. Fundament! Fundament! Do I find bottom? CAPTAIN: Aye, zany, anchor thy

Cit short thy prayers; they're curiously answered. Oh, I am froze white as my grandfather's beard!

Off! goch pere sticks! We'll build such fire the north will find his ice a-sweet.

Who orders me? Am I one that's ordered? CAPTAIN (striking him): Sticks, you goose! rummage thy bill! Woe me me me chilled surmises On thy peculiar. Ah, you wot Thou hast forgot thyself! I'll fetch Flint.

—Nigel Dennis, *Cards of Identity* ("The Prince of Antioch", Act I, scene 1)

2 CAPTAIN: Ho there, signor! You are in danger here! PHILARIO (hastening down): What's your news?

I am sent by Lucius to find out how fares Our right wing led by General Iacimo.

CAPTAIN: He is outgeneralled. There's no right wing now. Broken and routed, utterly defeated.

Our eagles taken and the few survivors In full flight like myself. And you?

PHILARIO: Is even worse, Lucius, I for I am taken. Our centre could not stand the rain of arrows.

CAPTAIN: Soooooo has disciplined these archers. They shoot together and advance in step!

Their horsemen trot in order to the charge to the charge mass full speed. —Bernard Shaw, *Cymbeline* (Revised)

3 THE AUTHOR: I've written that speech. Shall I read it? THE PRODUCER: Please, Mr SHAKESPEARE (reads): "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day, To the last syllable of recorded time;

And all our yesterday's have lighted forth, Out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, And then is heard no more; It is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing."

MR BURROUGS: Well, you don't expect me to say that I suppose. It's a third too short. There's not a single rhyme in it. It's got nothing to do with the situation, and it's an insult to the stage. "Strut and frets" indeed! I can see there's nothing left for me but to throw up the part. You can get anyone to please to play Macbeth. One thing is quite certain, I won't.

Exit MR BURROUGS in a passion. THE STAGE MANAGER (to the audience): Now you've done it. —Maurice Baring, *The Reluctant*, from *Disturbances* (also to be found in *Unreliable History*)

A Liverpool Epistle

To J. A. Steers, Esq, author of "The Coastline of England and Wales"

Alfred, this couple here—
My son, your daughter—
Can we deny it? strangers
To both of us. Ageing,
I find I take many a leaf
Out of the useful book
Of your behaviour. "Prof",
Your title for years, becomes
Me, or meets my need;
Mask for what heartaches, what
Uncertain, instantaneous
(Panicky sometimes)
Judgments how to behave in—
This net we seem to have woven
Between us, or been caught in.

Under a rusty gown not
Actual but conjured
By our behaviour, what
In some diminished sense
Compromising situations we
Either escape, or handle! Still,
Today I was found at a loss,
Confronted with the local
University's stalwarts
Of a past age: Bernard Pares,
Oliver Elton, George
Sampson, Fitzmaurice-Kelly...
Not that they did not deserve
Attention, there in their daubed
Likenesses; but how?
What was required of "the Prof."?

In the event I managed
Well enough by my
Lenient expectations, but
I had such a sense of how
Tragic, one might say,
Our occupation is
Or may be. How
Beset it is, after all,
How very far from "secluded".
This life of the scholar my son
And your daughter have followed us into!

It was explained to me,
For instance, there was one
Liverpool professor
Had had to be painted out
Of the group-portrait: Kuno
Meyer, Professor of German,
Whose notable devotion
To Ancient Irish took,
Come 1914, rather
A different colour. He
Declared himself for his Kaiser
Belligerently. And I
Must admit I am baffled:
Passion also has its
Claims upon us, surely;
Even the sort that is called,
Smilingly, "patriotic".

Donald Davie

Literature in brief

DAVID BURNS:
Nature and Culture in D. H.
Lawrence
637pp. Macmillan Press. £12.
0 333 28444 5

Nature and Culture in D. H. Lawrence is, in his author's explanation, "a work of criticism which may appear unfamiliar to English readers". This is because it aims "to examine an author's work from a philosophical standpoint"—something which apparently entails packing the foreground with philosophy to such an extent that the literature, all but disappearing from view, from Marcus Aurelius to Herbert Marcuse, *seems*—conjured up almost at random—troop through Aldous Huxley's discourse, Plato, Aquinas, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Cioran, Moore, Sartre—all are fused together in a but, far from shedding light on Lawrence, they darken Mr Burns's thesis.

In general, the philosophical material he so assiduously tugs towards Lawrence's fiction remains stubbornly remote from it: the "reducing" parallelism have all the grip of overwrought elastic. The plight of George Sarton, for instance, plucking for a woman of slightly higher class in *The White Peacock* is curiously described as "not unlike that suffered by some Latin American peoples" in relation to developed countries (which opens up room for an appearance by Pablo Picasso). In general, all the likelihood of George Sarton is a "Socratic" secret with

the Athenians was the same as Gerald's secret with the miners: he was one step ahead of them." Saggy analogies like this, cobwebby theories, and a dusty abstract prose style ensnared the few books Mr Burns deals with, quite stifling their literary vitality.

Peter Kemp

DEREK BREWER:
Symbolic Stories
Traditional narratives of the family drama in English literature
190pp. D. S. Brewer. £15.
0 85991 053 6

This book is a search for the "internal meanings" of various narratives about growing up. Refreshingly, the word *Bildungsroman* is never used. It proceeds from Cioran to *Great Expectations*, touching along the way on Homer, the Gospels, medieval romance, Chaucer, Shakespeare and Jane Austen. Dr Brewer writes in agreeably relaxed, easy-going style: for instance he tells us on page 1 that the introduction "may be depicted". The boundaries between literature and life are freely crossed, as when we are told in the middle of an account of *rites de passage* in "Modern Western Civilization" that "a wedding is rarely sanctioned (and when it is as with Miss Havisham's... is a disaster".

An interest in "family drama" leads Brewer to discover family relationships in some unexpected places. Cinderella's hearth is a

mother image, so is Puss in Boots, so is Guinevere, and so is the over in Hansel and Gretel, and, on the final page, Jeeves. Among the father figures he observes are Jack's Giant, the Green Knight, Malvolvo and Joe Gargery. As this select list may suggest, the insistence on inner symbolism relating to the family can be somewhat reductive: can narrators never present figures who really are just good friends with the protagonist? I would have imagined Puss in Boots to be one such. The approach seemed to work best with the works which are most explicitly about the protagonist's attempt to discover and resolve family relationships, like *Sir Degard* and *Great Expectations*.

Katherine Duncan-Jones

J. A. V. CHAPPEL assisted by JOHN GREGORY SHARPS:
Elizabeth Gaskell
A portrait in letters
172pp. Manchester University Press.
£8.75.
0 7190 0799 2

Elizabeth Gaskell was funny, charming, pretty, intelligent and highly principled, and, to our gain, an assiduous and entertaining correspondent. This book presents a selection of her letters (some discovered since the publication of the standard edition, which was also edited by J. A. V. Chappel) linked by biographical passages to form a picture of her life and character as far as possible in her own words.

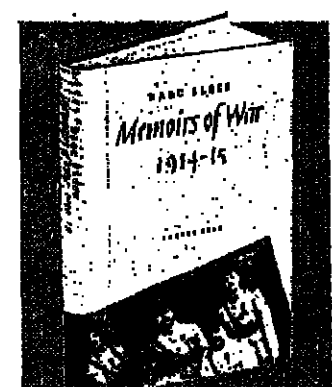
Whether she is giving excellent advice to a harassed aspiring authoress about balancing the claims of art and domesticity, and the importance of Organising one's Life, or gleefully celebrating to a friend her sense of freedom as she stays alone in Manchester when her family is away, or gossiping about literary acquaintances or her husband's Manchester colleagues and generosity (of her time, her money, and her personality), combined with her clear-headed benevolence, make reading them a pleasure.

But the book as a whole is of more dubious value. It is presumably cited as the general reader's editorial intervention is cut down to a minimum. This is a mistake. Curiosity is raised as to the identities and histories of her correspondents and those mentioned in the letters and, while the facts of her early life are confused, the exposition of them here does little to help the reader's bewilderment. And the editors tend to patronise her subject. They admit in their introduction that they find it difficult to accept recent claims made about her stature as a novelist. They also seem to find it hard to accept that this conventional wife should have enjoyed holidays apart from her family. Their few attempts to introduce the subject of feminism show that they have failed to comprehend it. Indeed the book is gross ammunition for the extreme feminist view that only women should deal with women's work. The general reader is better off with the standard edition of the letters, and Gerin's biography.

Jean Wilson

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Great historians have seldom described the notable events in which they themselves participated. Marc Bloch—co-founder of the influential French historical journal *Annales* and author of *Fuadai Society*, the classic study of medieval social systems—is fortunately an exception to this rule.



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commentary

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Jonathan Cape

Emotional highspots

By T. J. Binyon

Little Lord Fauntleroy.
Classic Cinema, Haymarket.

Previous audiences are generally speaking a hard-bitten lot. One has to be pretty tough to take, immediately after breakfast, all that the screen can throw at one in the way of blood, flesh or demonic possession, with nothing more to defend oneself with than a styrofoam beaker of instant coffee and a plot synopsis. Nevertheless, at the showing of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* the emotional highspots were marked by more than a few suspicious sniffles and energetic nose-blowings: sufficient to prove that Frances Hodgson Burnett's story is still as efficient a tear-jerker as ever, can still crack the hardest cases wide open.

In writing the story of seven-year-old Cedric Errol who, living with his widowed mother in New York, is then discovered to be the heir of the Earl of Dorincourt, is taken to England, soon wins the heart of his crusty, curmudgeonly grandfather, and finally, through a coincidence unbelievable outside this author's pages, escapes the dastardly attempt of an impostor to deprive him of his birthright, Frances Hodgson Burnett must have sunk a shaft deep into the collective unconscious and drawn up a bucketful of primal myth. It is difficult to explain otherwise the immense success of a book written in the stiltedly propagandist style of a child's primer, full of characters who would be startled to be described as two-dimensional, and awash with sentimentality. The authoress shows us mercy in only one respect; she does not give Fauntleroy a tip.

Jack Gold's new version of the story is in many ways an improvement on the original. The goopiness level is considerably reduced. Though Fauntleroy (Ricky Schroeder) keeps the famous black velvet suit with its "large Vandyke collar of rich lace", it is made clear that he dislikes it as much as we do. He is a tougher, more urbane character. He loses his golden curls and, while as before telling us rather too often that he calls his mother "Gardie", kindly refrains from doing so in our hearing.

Blanche Hanell's screenplay sharpens up the plot considerably, with episodes being given much more dramatic point and psychological verisimilitude (it would be hard for them to have less). Alec Guinness strolls, with many an enquiring touch, through the part of the Earl of Dorincourt, a more subtle and sarcastic presence than Miss Burnett's loud and blustering prototype. Cedric's mother, Mrs Errol (Connie Booth), is described by the family solicitor Mr Havisham (Eric Porter) as "a woman of considerable strength and purpose"; words that could hardly have been applied to the hapless widow, living in genteel poverty, of the original.

It is no doubt in deference to modern sensibilities that Mrs Errol is no longer allowed to live on unearned income, but works as a seamstress; is no longer allowed to

The Edinburgh Festival Programme for 1981 has just been announced. Festival drama productions will include the premiere of a new play by Tom Stoppard, *The Realist*. Presented by the National Theatre's Light Entertainment Company and directed by Peter Wood, the play is based on a play by Nestroy which also provided the inspiration for Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker* and for *Hello, Dolly*. The Festival will also present a production of *Cyrano de Bergerac* directed by Robin Phillips, featuring Derek Jacobi. Details of other drama productions, among them work by the Greek theatre company, Amphitheatre, will be announced in April, when the programme brochure is published.

Imitating Evelyn

By Lindsay Duguid

Evelyn Waugh
King's Head

Although only a stone's throw from Evelyn Waugh's 1930s home in Canonbury Square, the King's Head, Kingston is not the first place you would associate with the writer's clubman image. The familiar figure in the rather overstated country suit, given to terrifying sniffs and jaw-shaking rages, would hardly have warmed to the 1980s audience, composed as it must have been, in part of Jews, Americans, employees of the BBC and, who knows, perhaps the occasional Anglo-Catholic. One does, however, get the feeling that he would have loved a one-man show.

Richard Huggert's impersonation (at the King's Head until March 7) is convincing: he is particularly strong on Waugh's rudeness. The show is not a complete biography but is composed of a series of vignettes of middle-to-late Waugh, holding forth on his favourite subjects. Bits of dialogue give the flavour of Randolph Churchill, Tom Mitford, Ronald Knox (particularly appealing as an unsuitably saintly guest at a luncheon party) Graham Greene, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and various ladies who had the misfortune to be placed next to Waugh at dinner. Annihilating letters in response to impertinent requests are composed on stage, and the mystery of Tito's gender and the Club Bore of the Year competition (to be televised from the National Theatre) are treated with a minimum of props. The emphasis is

on the funny and genial Waugh, but we are also given a view of his sadder side in his friendship with Nancy Mitford (a little too soft here), and would he have described her as "viciously jolly"? And his depths of remorse ("Why do I behave so badly?").

None of the material—billed as "an original play"—is Waugh's own. Some of the anecdotes, such as meeting Randolph's "research assistant", Randolph and the Bible, and the trip to Hollywood are so familiar as to be out of the realm of copyright and into the apocryphal. The letters, rejoinders and epigrams are a kind of pastiche which in some cases ("birth control is flagrantly middle class") fairly close to recognizable sources. Other examples (the repeated introduction "I am a man totally without prejudice but...") and an extraordinary incantation against "yids, wops, wogs, krauts, niggers and Ezerias") do not quite ring true. The trouble with devising a show aimed at Waugh-buffs is that it reaches those who are well up in their subject. I think it unlikely that Evelyn Waugh would have worn suede boots in town, or known about baked beans on toast, and he would certainly have had to be dead about a year before reading a copy of *The Times* with the news on the front page.

The Wilkie Collins Society was formed in the summer of 1980 in order to promote research into the life and work of Wilkie Collins. The society has an international membership with branches in England and America. The annual subscription is £4.50. Further information is available from Andrew Sassam, Merton House, 36 Belsize Park, London NW3.

Seeking professional freedom

By Jennifer Uglow

Prostitute
Screen on the Green, Islington;
Cinecine, Leicester Square; Classic, Chelsea.

Prostitute is shocking, but not in the way the title suggests. The first job, after scenes of Birmingham businness and women waiting for business outside a shabby cinema, is the abrupt arrest of Rose, hauled into a car as if by over-zealous clients. We see the anxiety of the family, rapid but ineffectual intervention of social services, bare clothes for court next day, well-meaning but weary solicitor: "Whatever the rights and wrongs, we can't go in there and start changing the system." Rose pleads guilty to being a "common prostitute" and receives a three-month prison sentence.

The incident is disturbing, not because it hummers home a message, but because even by this stage the characters are like people we know, so that we cannot escape the idea of individuality. The accuracy and depth of characterization complicates our response, enabling *Prostitute* to avoid disjunction while presenting a 'forced' argument. Tony Garnett explored the potential of television film like no other screen-treading. Screenwriters and in his collaboration with Ken Loach, and now he seems to relish the freedom of the cinema. Settings and mood are conveyed with economy and power, even the background characters are memorable, and the subject is composed and controlled, despite the air of spontaneity which comes from the technique of improvising from set situations.

The two sides of the story of *Prostitute* are joined by the figure of Rose's social worker Louise, an interesting, wary, nervy interpretation by Kate Crutcher, moved by Rose's arrest to get the women to form a self-help group, first concentrating on legal rights, then fighting to change the law. So on one level, this is a film about political action, about 'overcoming' timidly, learning to negotiate, learning tactics, swallowing principles, to gain short-term aims. At the same time, another *Prostitute*, Sandra, who is Louise's intimate and

friend, is leaving the streets for the golden metropolis, via the local massage parlour and contacts made in the big hotels. Her individualism ("What's wrong with ambition?") at first looks like strength but ends as a symbol of loneliness in consequence of the loss of her group. The further she progresses, the more humiliated and powerless she becomes; and finally, in a grim sequence, she proves far more at the disposal of the police than Rose. Eleanor Forsythe's portrayal of Sandra is convincing, stubborn, vulnerable and often very funny.

Indeed, the film is full of humour, much of the low-key, knowing, ledge-like smothered hilarity when Louise's aunt meets Sandra at a wedding reception and takes her, from her explanation of the kind of job she does, to be a voluntary social worker: "Oh, like meals on wheels." Sex is work and is shown and discussed as such, analysed sometimes with ribaldry or caustic wit, sometimes with technical detachment, sometimes with loathing. The prostitute's "freedom" is contrasted with the inhibition of the straight world, and the only sequence which deals with embarrassment, created with masterful irony, follows the largely silent series of signals by which Louise manoeuvres Giff, an engagingly shy sociology lecturer whom she has in films like a conference, into staying the night.

Garnett is sensitive to the devices people use to ward off involvement: the social worker who sees only "clients and problems", the MP who must "explore further at constituency level". Just as Louise answers Giff's definition of prostitution in terms of "Parsonian models", and "reflexivity" with the inquiry "Have you met one?" so this film replaces a labelled group by a collection of individuals. It must be said that those individuals, with the prostitute's viewpoint and her right to a livelihood, are more; uncomfortable, deeper questions, for example about the balance of sexual power and the nature of exploitation, the degree of choice the women actually have and the constraints on liberty which make the compulsory recognition of conflicting aims a radical film. But it is far from revolutionary. It does, however, show the

hypocrisy of a law which leaves the service untouched while penalising the provider, and which enforces the notorious double standard—if a woman taps a man on the shoulder she's arrested, but the other way round—that's flattery. It is an indictment of the market as well as the law, and the two control systems are shown to reinforce each other. The continuing legal threat removes any appeal against blackmail, assault or intimidation and fosters, if it does not create, a conditions for argument, exploitation and for police corruption.

Garnett received advice from PROS (Programme for Reform of the Law on Soliciting) and the film appears partly a tribute to the group. *Prostitute* could help to replace fantasy and cliché by a clearer view, and it must be an appointment in the campaign to end anyone concerned with the original and impossibly made film is not achieving general release.

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commentary

Preserving the illusion

By David Mayer

The Maugham Collection of Theatrical Paintings
National Theatre Foyer

In the foyers of most West End and numerous provincial theatres, framed notices, cast in the lettering of Victorian playbills, have hung since 1978 to inform us that the Theatre Museum, until then a separate department of the Victoria and Albert Museum, is closed, to reopen "late in 1980" in new surroundings in Covent Garden. The Theatre Museum is still closed, and now, two months into 1981, work has yet to begin on the site selected for this museum, the old Flower Market not many paces from the Royal Opera House. To forestall criticism of this protracted closure, the Theatre Museum has offered a few touring exhibitions of ballet costumes, but it has not mounted a specifically theatrical exhibition for above four years.

In this dearth, the last such exhibition having been the one of Clarkson Stanfield's marine and stage painting seen in Sunderland in the autumn of 1979, the current display of theatrical paintings bequeathed to the National Theatre by their collector, W. Somerset Maugham, takes on a particular significance. Here is a collection of eighty-two pictures, almost equally divided between oils and watercolours, individually important as records of theatre history, newly cleaned, carefully (if possibly too brilliantly) illuminated, ranged round the public spaces adjoining the Olivier and Lyttelton Theatres.

Maugham's taste was for theatrical incident and portraiture from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, the time of Garrick to that of Macready. Such taste brought into Maugham's possession half a dozen major works by Zoffany, but the body of the collection is made up by the paintings of lesser artists whose eye for telling anecdote and the memorable moment onstage was sometimes less than their capacity to paint what they saw. The outstanding exception is Samuel De Wilde, whose single portraits-in-character, executed with equal facility in oil and watercolour, dominate this display. De Wilde scuttled between the green rooms of Drury Lane and Covent Garden to coast into his studio the popular performers of the late Georgian stage, including the great interpreter of melodramatic villainia Charles Farley, the comedians William Blanchard, Charles Mathews, and William Warren and the musical entertainer Theresa de Camp.

Theatrical portraits were less often sold to the actors than to their fans, and so constant was the demand for copies that many portraits and scenes were reproduced



The nineteenth-century actor Charles James Mathews in his earliest role "The Little Pycnon", when he was three and a half. The portrait, a watercolour by Samuel De Wilde, is in the exhibition reviewed here.

by engravers and printers—upmarket as mezzotints, downmarket as tuppence coloured prints, and in between as fine engravings to precede standard editions of playtexts. It was from prints struck from original oils that a knowledge of the London stage was disseminated to play-readers as remote as the North American colonies and Australia. And from such images the occupants of Mansfield Park learnt the iconography of *Lovers' Vows*.

Displaying Maugham's collection brings into the foreground problems old to museums but new to the National Theatre. Patrons who commissioned the original paintings or who bought prints derived from the originals were familiar with a wide repertoire of standard plays. But the National's patrons now gaze on

foyer walls at dramas whose plots are remote, whose interpreters are unknown, whose very titles remind us how little of the national repertoire the National Theatre actually performs. Maugham's paintings are hung with adjoining labels that identify no more than artist, play, date of performance and actors depicted. Nothing is offered to explicate and interpret the scene to the spectator. Fortunately, a catalogue illustrating the entire collection with an abundant number of colour-plates meticulously prepared by Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson (68pp, 63 illustrations, 14 in colour, £3.95, £3.50 pb) goes some distance toward compensating for deficiencies in explanatory labelling.

This guide joins Mackintosh's catalogue to the Georgian Theatre

Exhibition and Pieter van der Meuw's Clarkson Stanfield catalogue as an important text on stage painting. I could wish that Mander and Mitchenson had found more to say about the interpretation of theatrical painting. Summaries of plots are insufficient. We need to know, for example, which paintings are thought to illustrate stage sets and to reproduce the effects of stages lit by candles or gas. Was Zoffany's rendering of Garrick and Susannah Cibber taken from an actual production of *Venice Ob-served* or wholly produced in the artist's studio? We need, as well, to know more about the prints inspired by these paintings, and about their dissemination.

There is a further problem implicit in Maugham's bequest. He offered his paintings as objects to brighten the grey walls of a modern theatre, not as documents to be studied and interpreted. But until they are hung with fuller captions, they can be little more than costly elegant wallpaper on Sir Denys Lasdun's textured concrete, wall-paper that may actually suffer damage as a result of the strong light coming from the river, and the ventilation that keeps the foyers dryer and warmer than conventional theatres. A responsibility for conservation passed to the National Theatre with Maugham's gift.

These problems lead back to those of our absent Theatre Museum, and to the anxieties felt by its former users for whom the primitive Museum was an essential reference archive as well as the sponsor of inspired theatre exhibitions. Restive at the prospect of a three-year delay, these users were cheered by a statement in the Commons by the then Minister for the Arts, Norman St John-Stevas, that he would do his best "to see that this most important project in which I take a personal interest goes ahead on time", and secondly by the 1979 Christmas card from the director of the Theatre Museum, which offered this quotation from *Hamlet* as its seasonal message of hope. By any calculation, the earliest date at which the museum might now be ready to open is the end of 1983, assuming that the current Minister for the Arts not only shares Mr St John-Stevas's personal interest in the future of the museum but is also bolder than him at directing funds towards it. But Mr Channon has been silent on this subject, and his absence from the ceremony in which actors of the National Theatre accepted the Maugham bequest may suggest that "the most important project" and its ramifications have yet to come to his notice.

Forced to improvise

By Julie Curtis

The Crimson Island
Globe Theatre Club, 11 Pembridge Rd, W11.

In March, 1930, Bulgakov wrote a letter to Stalin—there is no proof that it was sent—discussing *The Criminal Island* which had recently been banned. "In this play there stands a sinister shadow, and that is the shadow of the Chief Repertory Committee. It is they who are nurturing Helots, panegyrics, and terrified 'lockers'. They are strangling creative thought, they are destroying Soviet drama, and they will succeed. I have not been expressing these thoughts in corners, in whispers. I have included them in a dramatic pamphlet, and I have put that pamphlet on the stage. The struggle against censorship, whatever its nature and whatever the power under which it exists, is my duty as a writer, as are appeals for freedom of the press."

Lou Stein has performed a long overdue service in staging this first production of the play in English. Although it is less well known than Bulgakov's *Days of the Turbina* (excellently staged in 1979 by the RSC as *The White Guard*), its appeal

ought to be wider since it is rooted less in the complexities of Ukrainian history and more in the history of the Soviet theatre in the 1920s—a period expertly reflected in Stein's production. The costumes, including the chiffon great skirts of the *harem*, belong conspicuously to the 1920s, the only lapse being Savva Lukich's Chicago-gangster outfit; and the ebullient surrealism of the whole performance is typical of the experimentalism of early post-Revolutionary drama.

The main body of the work, framed by a prologue and an epilogue, is a play within a play—a fantastical comic allusion of the revolution, with "ideological" red natives struggling for freedom after the death of their white tsar, first against an opportunist white, Kiri Kuki, who pretends to be a champion of democracy, and then against Anglo-French capitalists (characters to be found in Bulgakov's later work, *Theatrical Novel* translated into English as *Black Snow*).

Stein is himself responsible for the sensitive English text used. He makes effective use of a tiny stage and minimal props for a play which might seem to depend on spectacular presentation—the tropical island is wonderfully evoked with a shed-out erupting volcano and a green drape pipe which sprouts leaves and bananas at the tug of a cord. And his actors, particularly James Fleet, as Dymogatsky/Kiri-Kuki and Richard Klee as Gennady Panfilovich, give lively performances.

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Oxford University Press

Towards the Mountain

An Autobiography Alan Paton

Towards the Mountain is the South African writer Alan Paton's autobiographical account of the first half of his life. The publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in 1948 brought him a world-wide reputation, and he has been a steadfast leader in the fight against the increasing powers and pressures of the South African government. Illustrated £12.50

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Compiled by A. J. Augarde

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Thought for Food gives detailed information about nutrition for the ordinary reader, examines the evidence that links certain diseases and types of food, looks at special diets and dieting, and answers a great many questions about food and nutrition, simply and briefly. £4.50 Oxford Paperbacks £2.25

The state bountiful

By Eugen Weber

MICHAEL MACDONALD MOONEY:
The Ministry of Culture
Connections among Art, Money and Politics
427pp. New York: Wyndham Books.
\$14.95.

Bad books are written on good subjects, but this is an egregious performance. Michael Macdonald Mooney, a Washington editor of *Harper's Magazine*, has spent several years researching America's cultural bureaucracy—a compound of government institutions and foundations which together form his *Ministry of Culture*. The reference begins with quotes from Orwell, Jack London (*The Iron Heel*), Sinclair Lewis (*It Can't Happen Here*), and Jeremiah (II 13). Only Aldous Huxley is excused.

The general idea is that evil lurks in and oozes out of Washington's political activities. The limp "conspiracy" attempts of the Smithsonian and the National Park Service are lumped with the rather more forceful efforts of the Soviet state. The 1979 court injunctions (not upheld) against *The Progressive* magazine's desire to publish an article on "The H-Bomb Secret" are assimilated to "those decrees issued from Berlin as necessities to public order after the Reichstag fire in 1933". But Mr Mooney's principal targets are the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), coordinated along with other agencies by the Federal Council on Arts and Humanities, "the White House Ministry of Culture", chaired and manipulated in the late 1970s by Jean Adams Mondale, wife of Mr Carter's vice-president.

The council's balliwick and (later) Mrs Mondale's was authorized by Congress in 1965 to coordinate some two or three hundred programmes, no one knows quite how many, or quite how much they spend. The National Science Foundation (NSF), established with a small appropriation in 1950, now distributes about a billion dollars a year. NEH and NEA, founded in 1965 with budgets of around 2.5 million each, bestow over 300 million a year. Some 12 further billion annually (not including funds flowing from Defence) are spent by such heavy supporters of research as NASA and the National Institutes of Health. A billion here and a billion there, as the late Senator Dirksen used to say, soon adds up to money. In Mooney's judgement, over 20 billions' worth of money.

Of this, his main queries distribute only a small proportion to good deal of which actually goes to support scholarship, research

and performance. They do, however, furnish the author with object lessons of political malfeasance. With frequent excursions to view the doings of various accomplices, abettors, coadjutors, satellites and accessories, Mooney succeeds in providing, not exactly a description but a strong impression of the cat's cradle of departments, agencies, and diverse, often contradictory, interests represented, subsidized and intimidated by the privileged class of federal bureaucracy: a cultural Brave New World all of whose roads are paved with good intentions, or at least, with good platitudes.

Privileged is an *Economist*-coined term for a class to be found mostly in Communist countries. But had the *Economist* treated Mooney's

subject as perhaps it should, given its vast economic (and political) implications, one would have got a clear account, a convincing interpretation. Here, there is only an extended pamphlet, occasionally tart, generally heavy-handed, its points (let alone its points) put in the language of verbiage. With the old-fashioned readers, lapsing into the diagonal perusal mode, might even mutter: bilge.

Mooney derides politicians and quasi-politicians like Mrs Mondale for giving vapid, pretentious speeches, as if that was not one of their conditions of employment. He reveals, in a horrible dicta, that cultural activities are used for political ends, foreign and domestic; that the great corporations contributing to such political enterprises reap benefits; and that those involved feel and act important because of the power they wield. He exposts, not for the first time but with undeniable, if long-winded, verve, *les comptes fantastiques* of the Comprehensive Employment Training Act ("did 10,000 artists dance on OETA grounds?").

He describes the "projects" which are often fakery; the busy work in spurious subjects; the professional experts working full time out of state, and local agencies to co-

ordinate "folk" arts; the hordes of academic specialists employed to provide judgment and counsel, whether appropriate or not; the tendency, when things do not work, to pour in lots more money. He denounces the tortuous process of getting academics to read writers' fees, and writers to rewrite so as to include all possible points of view, turning public television productions (among others) to weary jello. True enough: you get more pull by being dull. And cautious. He also denounces peer review of grant applications as "a social convention of orthodoxy" and the refusal to conduct such reviews in public as clandestine procedures, their "secrecy" both illegal (he may be right) and, somehow, malign.

The author's own adventures in pursuit of information about NEA and NEH illustrate the absurdities (and costs) that flow from the Freedom of Information Act, and the equally great absurdities (and costs) that stem from the concurrent but contradictory legislation protecting privacy; and demonstrate how bureaucracy multiplies the already impressive human capacity for muddle.

The political establishment accounts for only a small portion of contemporary America's legalistic nonsense, for none of the fifty-five major rule-making agencies that turn out 77,000 pages of new regulations each year, nor for the four-fold increase of government regulations and of the number of lawyers practicing in Washington over the past decade. Yet the account of its doings reads like a fifty-five volume of the *Files of American Public* (and private) life: inclusive, indecisive, irresponsible; diversity excluding a clear voice, democracy shirking clear decision.

Of course the agenda of the federal foundations is political. But, from the beneficiaries' point of view, they furnish aid they could not get elsewhere. Perhaps they should not get it (some certainly should not), but quality control should not be advanced by Mooney's favourite panacea: the public allocation of grants. Of course the "public interest" is often the private interest of those who do well by doing good. That is the rather costly tribute that virtue pays to vice. If such revelations warrant major harangues, a little crispness would help. In its absence, the naive and garrulous jumble that we get is best eyed at a flick clip if it is eyed at all.

Why, then, review the book? Because its subject is of vital interest to American cultural life. Mr Mooney was right to tackle it. His failure to do it justice should not discourage others. Quite the contrary. In every far book there lies a thin book waiting to speak up. Should the thin book now buried in Mooney's verbiage make itself heard, it would have a fine tale to tell.

Dr Munby himself edited Madden's account of his earliest visit to Cambridge (in 1833), and Mr Rogers wisely reprints this first narrative of a series of scholarly expeditions that extends as late as 1863. None of the extracts are fully representative of the diary as a whole, as Madden in Cambridge was always at a welcome distance from the frustration of official life at the British Museum; the journal is thus comparatively free from the personal vituperations and other remarks made (as he himself put it) "often in extreme bitterness of spirit" at his official life.

Chronicler of his official life, a peculiar fascination. Freed from the burdens of his work at the museum, he could pursue his textual investigations at Cambridge in relative tranquillity of mind. Personal griefs and frustrations etc. of course mentioned, particularly when they still mounded his first wife, and he does not mind words when assigning blame: the Trinity manuscript of *Corpus* was "shamefully ill-used" and "injured by constant handling". It is a pity that a trustworthy man, but not a gentleman or a man of education, and utterly incompetent to the task of giving any information respecting the "treasures". Yet Madden's near-sightings in his appreciation of skilled or merely competent

Commerce before culture

By Nigel Cross

MICHAEL LANE:
Books and Publishers
149pp. Lexington Books. £9.50.
0 663 03383 9

Michael Lane gives the impression that he would like his essay on modern publishing to be studied with profit by publishers, if not by authors. "British publishing is gravely ill", he writes, and he identifies the cause of this illness as the fragmentation of a once common culture:

no formally encoded message... can be wholly or satisfactorily disseminated from the integral matrix of its medium's given technical properties and the human and organizational apparatus for its realization. Thus there can be no crisis in the institutions of culture without there being some comparable crisis in the culture itself.

Lane is a sociologist, and his book about books must have been written for other sociologists or he would have taken more trouble to avoid a language which is unfamiliar to most publishers, who, as he points out, are predominantly untrained, emotional, middle-class arts graduates.

The main weakness of Lane's sociological approach is that it relies heavily on out-of-date research. It is of little value to a publisher, or anyone else concerned with book production, to read extracts from 1966 interviews with anonymous publishers and editors, from an unnamed "single general publishing house". And if we had been given even some of the names of the "120 publishers in 36 different houses" whom Lane interviewed in 1971.2 then his work might have been of passing historical interest, if only at the level of gossip. As it is, the most up-to-date reference he can muster is the 1976 figure for book production of 34,434 new and reprinted titles. If he had taken the trouble to locate the 1979 figure of 41,480, he would have learnt that during the second half of the 1970s there was a rapid rise in the number of new titles as publishers reduced their print runs and expanded their lists in order to always successful bid to remain solvent.

Books and Publishers is, among other things, a historical survey, as indicated by the subtitle: "commerce against culture in postwar Britain". However Michael Lane would have been on safer ground if he had not tried to draw false comparisons with the nineteenth century. He begins by asserting that nineteenth-century publishers were principally hard-headed businessmen, ungentlemanly, with little control over the shaping of culture—a role which was performed by nonpublishing cultural arbiters, particularly the great critical reviews.

The great nineteenth-century publishers were certainly as gentlemanly as their twentieth-century counterparts, though they were often less businesslike. And the great critical reviews were certainly nonpublishing cultural arbiters, not "publishing cultural arbiters" as Lane writes, "display a near-mythical confidence in the virtues of written fluency". Based on Lane's predominantly opaque and perceptive at being an Expert. Does this mean that accidental competence in Chinese affairs could be a liability for a China Expert? Not necessarily, at least not as long as he can hide it as well as his basic ignorance. The Expert should in any case be at great length, in four or five volumes, thoughtfully and in a prestigious publisher's edition. The Expert cultivates objectivity, balance and Fair-Mindedness. It will not conflict between your subjective and his subjectivity, these qualities enable him, at the crucial juncture, to rise above the realm of objectivity, from which he will not be able to retreat and deliver the final conclusion. The Expert is not emotional: he always remains calm; there are two sides to the coin. I think that, even if you were to confront him with Auschwitz, for example, he would still be able to say that one should not have the subjective standards. Nazi values which were, after all, quite different. After every statement, the Expert cautions: "points to the theoretical possibility of also stat-

quite the contrary; he is first and foremost a businessman who pays close attention to the dictates of the market". The traditionalist on the other hand believes that culture is "would be tantamount to casting pearls before swine". Here Lane becomes confused by his own terms, for although he admits that yesterday's avant-garde is tomorrow's great tradition, he claims that the traditionalist is culturally conservative—a phrase unable to respond to avant-gardism. He also points out that avant-garde art is despised by the public at least until the death of the artist. It is unlikely, therefore, that the "modernist" publisher with his eye firmly on the market will prove to be either bold or innovative in matters connected with public opinion.

Lane sees traditionalist publishing as "essentially negative, exercising control by declining to publish". For such publishers culture "emanates from individuals, deals with individuals, and is apprehended by individuals". Traditionalist publishers, then, would seem to be well disposed towards authors. However authors should be wary of the modernist publishers who, Lane suggests, exert a "positive control" on culture by "intervening in the creation of the text".

By denying writers an absolute and exclusive role in the formation and expression of ideas and problems, the "modernist" greatly enlarges the publisher's own part as an originator or co-creator... the writer then comes to be defined as a professionally competent technician who uses skills to translate ideas into a text.

This analysis, while unfriendly to authors, goes a long way to explaining the escalating number of new titles published each year. Most books are no longer written by authors, but put together and revised by technicians. Lane himself would not claim to be an author; a few of the most books are put out by academic publishers in any sense possess the identity [sic] of author; their writing is the consequence of their engagement in some other role. The trouble is that such bookmakers are rarely competent technicians either.

If the modernist publisher is creator of the "cultural object", then the errors contained in the object are even more the responsibility of the publisher, especially in a work purporting to tell publishers a few home truths. Lane, in his acknowledgements, praises his editorial staff of Lexington Books who "worked miracles on a messy manuscript". Well, they have succeeded in producing a messy text, in a work purporting to tell publishers a few home truths. Lane, in his acknowledgements, praises his editorial staff of Lexington Books who "worked miracles on a messy manuscript". Well, they have succeeded in producing a messy text, in a work purporting to tell publishers a few home truths. Lane, in his acknowledgements, praises his editorial staff of Lexington Books who "worked miracles on a messy manuscript". Well, they have succeeded in producing a messy text, in a work purporting to tell publishers a few home truths.

Professor Friedman and Madame Han Suyin represent the two extremes of a prism—the latter apparently in a state of blissful ignorance, the other knowing everything, yet the way in which both eventually stumbled suggests that in this matter at least, the knowledge factor is after all quite relevant. What a successful China Expert needs, first and foremost, is not so much China expertise as expertise at being an Expert. Does this mean that accidental competence in Chinese affairs could be a liability for a China Expert? Not necessarily, at least not as long as he can hide it as well as his basic ignorance. The Expert should in any case be at great length, in four or five volumes, thoughtfully and in a prestigious publisher's edition. The Expert cultivates objectivity, balance and Fair-Mindedness. It will not conflict between your subjective and his subjectivity, these qualities enable him, at the crucial juncture, to rise above the realm of objectivity, from which he will not be able to retreat and deliver the final conclusion. The Expert is not emotional: he always remains calm; there are two sides to the coin. I think that, even if you were to confront him with Auschwitz, for example, he would still be able to say that one should not have the subjective standards. Nazi values which were, after all, quite different. After every statement, the Expert cautions: "points to the theoretical possibility of also stat-

ing the opposite; however, when presenting opinions or facts which run counter to his own private prejudices, he will be careful not to lend them any real significance—though, at the same time, he will let them discreetly stand as emergency exits should his own views eventually be proved wrong.

Ross Terrill, an Australian writer now settled in the United States, has been acclaimed there as the ultimate China Expert. I think he fully qualifies for the title.

All change among the China-watchers

By Simon Leys

ROSS TERRILL:
Mao
A Biography
481pp. Harper and Row. £8.95.
0 05 337012 3

Paris taxi-drivers are notoriously sophisticated in their use of invective: "Hé, va donc, structuraliste!" is one of their recent apostrophes—which makes one wonder when they will start calling their victims "China Experts".

Perhaps we should not be too harsh on these experts: the fratricide recently suffered a traumatic experience and are still in a state of shock. Should I suddenly start to talk, I suppose that ichthyology would also have to undergo a dramatic revision of its basic approach. A certain type of "instant-ichthyology" was indeed based on the assumption that the Chinese people were as different from us in their fundamental aspirations, and as unable to communicate with us, as the inhabitants of the oceanic depths; and when they eventually rose to the surface and began to cry out sufficiently loudly and clearly for their messages to get through to the general public, there was much consternation among the China pundits.

Professor Edward Friedman, a teacher of Chinese Politics at American University, recently wrote a piece in the *New York Times* which informed its readers that various atrocities had taken place in China during the Maoist era. That a Professor of Chinese Politics should appear to have discovered these facts nearly ten years after even lazy undergraduates were aware of them may have made them news only for the *New York Times*; nevertheless, there was something genuinely touching in his implied confession of ignorance.

Madame Han Suyin, who knows China inside out, seldom lets her intelligence, experience and information interfere with her writing. One rainy Sunday, I amused myself by compiling a small anthology (recently published elsewhere) of her pronouncements on China, and learnt that the Cultural Revolution was a Great Leap Forward for mankind; that it was an abysmal disaster for the Chinese; that the Red Guards were well-behaved, helpful and democratic-minded; that they were savage and terrifying fascist bullies; that the Cultural Revolution was a tremendous spur for China's economy; that it utterly ruined China's economy; that Lin Biao was the bulwark of the Revolution; that Lin Biao was a murderer, a warlord and traitor; that Jiang Qing was hard to prevent violence; that Jiang Qing did her best to foster violence; etc., etc.

Professor Friedman and Madame Han Suyin represent the two extremes of a prism—the latter apparently in a state of blissful ignorance, the other knowing everything, yet the way in which both eventually stumbled suggests that in this matter at least, the knowledge factor is after all quite relevant. What a successful China Expert needs, first and foremost, is not so much China expertise as expertise at being an Expert. Does this mean that accidental competence in Chinese affairs could be a liability for a China Expert? Not necessarily, at least not as long as he can hide it as well as his basic ignorance. The Expert should in any case be at great length, in four or five volumes, thoughtfully and in a prestigious publisher's edition. The Expert cultivates objectivity, balance and Fair-Mindedness. It will not conflict between your subjective and his subjectivity, these qualities enable him, at the crucial juncture, to rise above the realm of objectivity, from which he will not be able to retreat and deliver the final conclusion. The Expert is not emotional: he always remains calm; there are two sides to the coin. I think that, even if you were to confront him with Auschwitz, for example, he would still be able to say that one should not have the subjective standards. Nazi values which were, after all, quite different. After every statement, the Expert cautions: "points to the theoretical possibility of also stat-

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Between the Charybdis of Professor Friedman and the Scylla of Madame Han Suyin, Mr Terrill has been able to steer a skillful middle course. I would not go so far as to say that he has ever imparted to his readers much useful insight on China (actually, I am afraid, he has misled them rather seriously on

several occasions); nevertheless, unlike his less subtle colleagues, he has managed to navigate safely through treacherous and turbulent waters and to keep his Expertise aloof against tremendous odds. By this sign you can recognise a genuine Expert: once an Expert, always an Expert.

When I was invited to review Terrill's biography of Mao, I first declined the suggestion; it seemed to me that the book in itself hardly warranted any comment—however, its significance lies more in what it omits than in what it commits. If I eventually accepted the task, it was not merely to offer a few observations on the "physiology de l'Expert", but rather to take the opportunity to correct a bias I may have been guilty of in the past when reviewing some of Terrill's earlier works. These works include *800,000,000: The Real China* (1971), *Flowers on an Iron Tree* (1975), *The Future of China* (1978), and *The China Difference* (1979), which, like *China and Ourselves* (1969), is a collection of essays by various authors, edited with an introduction by Terrill.

My first encounter with his writings was inauspicious: opening at random his *Flowers on an Iron Tree*, I came upon a passage in which he described, as if he had visited it, a monument in the grounds which had been razed to the ground years before. After that it was hard for me to conjure away a vision of Terrill at work on his travels, busying himself with the study of outdated guide-books, without actually leaving his hotel room. For a long time this unfortunate fausse note was to colour (unfairly, no doubt) the impression I had formed of Terrill's endeavours. Now, not only do I feel that my indignation was somewhat excessive, but I begin to see that in all the liberties which Terrill takes with reality, there is always a principle and a method, both of which I completely overlooked at the time; when he sees things which are not there, at least he recognises these are things which should be there. This gives a kind

of Platonic quality to his vision—it may be of little practical value, but it certainly testifies to the essential goodness and idealistic nature of his intentions.

All too often his statements are likely to provoke strong reactions in any informed reader; but these reactions, in their very variety, appear at once so totally out of tune with the style of this gentle and amiable man, that one feels immediately ashamed of them. To attack Mr Terrill seems as indecent as kicking a blind man's dog.

His basic approach is that of the perfect social hostess guiding the dinner-table conversation: he is entertaining, but never controversial; avoid all topics that could displease, give offence or create unpleasantness; have something nice to say to everybody (his Mao, for instance,

admiration for the Maoist regime (which are not proponents, but admirers of the Chinese revolution)—this very regime which, as we now learn from the *People's Daily* and from Deng Xiaoping himself (and even, to some extent from Terrill's latest writings!) went off the track as early as 1957, and ended up in a decade of near civil war and of "feudal-fascist terror".

Terrill visited China several times; his most extensive investigations, resulting in his influential *800,000,000: The Real China*, were conducted during the early 1970s—a time which was, by the reckoning of the Chinese themselves, one of the bleakest and darkest periods in their recent history. The country which had been bled white by the violence of the "Cultural Revolution" was frozen with fear, sunk

into misery; it could hardly breathe under the cruel and cretinous tyranny of the Maoist Gang. Though it is only now that the Chinese press can describe in full and harrowing detail that sinister era, its horror was so pervasive that even foreigners, however insensitive and insulated against the Chinese reality, could not fail to perceive it (though it is true, sadly, that too few of them dared at the time to say so publicly). Yet, what did Terrill see? "The 1971 visit deepened my admiration for [Maoist] China," in that hour of ferocious oppression, suffering and despair, of humiliation and anguish, he enjoyed "the peace of the brightly coloured hills and valleys of China, the excellence of Chinese cuisine..."

Do not think, however, that his enjoyment was merely that of a tourist: "I happen too to be moved by the social gains of the Chinese revolution. In a magnificent way, it has healed the sick, fed the hungry and given security to the ordinary man of China." Maoism was: "Change with a purpose... the purposive change speaks strength, control, confidence, leadership, political power in the service of values." "China is a world which is sterner in its political imperatives but which in human terms may be a simpler and more relaxed world." "How much more relaxed? Even though China is tightly run, this near total control, this police terror. The techniques of Stalinist terror—armed police everywhere, mass killings, murder of political opponents, knocks on the door at 3 a.m., then a shot—are not peculiar to China today... Control is more psychological, by physical coercion... The method of control is amazingly light-handed by Communist standards..." "The lack of a single execution by the state of a top Communist leader is a sign of a more humane society, a purgative of the milder fare of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping in 1966... They lived for many months in their own homes. No doubt they lounged in armchairs and

under the shelter of a massive, burr-like, progressively banished. Sometimes, however, he is jerked out of his slumber by one of Terrill's original discoveries: "Superstitions are gone that used to make rural people in China see themselves as a mere sick or bird rather than an aware individual." If he genuinely believes that in pre-revolutionary China the people saw themselves as "sicks and birds" we can more easily understand why he deems Maoist society to have achieved such a "prodigious social progress".

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read in the *People's Daily* the record of their misdeeds. . . . Liu was sent to a village, his health declined and in 1973 he died of a new leprosy. . . . (Actually, if one did not know of Terrill's essential decency, one might suspect him of making here a very sick joke indeed; Liu, who was very ill, was left by his tormentors lying in his own excrement, completely naked on the freezing cement floor of his jail, till he died. . . . As for Deng, though it is true that he was less roughly treated, he confessed in a recent interview that he spent all these years in constant fear of being assassinated.)

According to Terrill, Maoism has worked miracles in all areas: it "feeds a quarter of the world population by 10 per cent per year"; it has achieved "thirty years of social progress"; thanks to it, even the blind can now see and the paralytic can walk. . . . Terrill himself observed while visiting a hospital: "The myth of Mao is a functional medicine and to much endeavour in China. . . . It seemed to give [the patient] a mental picture of a world he could rejoin, and his doctors a vital exorcism of resourcefulness. . . . In conclusion, there are things to be learned from Maoism: a public health system that serves all the people, a system of education that combines theory and practice, and economic growth that does not ravage the environment."

The impossibility of substantiating these fanciful claims never discouraged Terrill; for him, it was enough to conjure up some mythical achievements by a method of repetitive incantation, reminiscent of the Bellman in Lewis Carroll: Just a place for a Snark! I have said it twice:

That alone should encourage the Just a place for a Snark! I have said it thrice: What I tell you three times is true.

Alas! After he had said it three times and turned the Chinese to talk, and they told the world quite a different story. No only the dissenters writing on the Democracy Wall in Peking, but even the communist leadership itself were to expose in gruesome detail the dark reality of Maoism: the bloody purges, the random arrests, tortures and executions; the famines, the industrial mismanagement, the endemic problems of unemployment, hunger, delinquency, the stagnation and regression of living standards in the countryside; the corruption of the cadres; the ruin of the education system; the largest-scale destruction of cultural life; the large-scale destruction of the natural environment; the sham of the agricultural models, of Maoist medicine, etc. etc.

As a result of these official disclosures, Terrill has now to a large extent already effected his own *aggravation*: Mao, his latest book as well as some of his recent articles, reflect this new candour. Sometimes it does more good than well with the picture presented by his earlier writings—but who cares? Readers' amnesia will always remain the cornerstone of an Expert's authority.

The *People's Daily* has already apologized to its readers for "all the lies and distortions" which were carried in the past, and even warned readers against "the false, boastful and untrue reports" which it "still often carries". The China Experts used to echo it so faithfully—will they, some time again, follow suit and offer similar apologies to their own readers?

Or perhaps they were living in a state of pure and blessed ignorance. It is a fact that official admissions of Maoist bankruptcy are a very recent phenomenon; nevertheless, for more than twenty years, voices of popular dissent have been constantly heard in China, turning sometimes into thunderous outcries. These voices were largely ignored in Terrill's works; having first carefully stuffed his ears with Maoist cotton-wool, he then wonders why he can hear so little, and concludes, "To be sure, it is very hard for us to measure the feelings of the Chinese people on any issue."

Terrill's approach ignores the very existence of Maoist atrocities. Whenever this is not feasible, two

Expeditions of a scholar

By Alan Bell

T. D. ROGERS (Editor):
Sir Frederic Madden at Cambridge
54pp. Cambridge Bibliographical Society. £5.
01 90205 35 8

The massive diary of the great medievalist and palaeographer Sir Frederic Madden (1801-73), Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum from 1837 to 1866, remains the most important unpublished source for the history of English scholarship in the nineteenth century. Plans for editing the four million words of text and publishing selections from it have been discussed from time to time, but have so far come to nothing. T. D. Rogers's selection of several long passages dealing with Madden's visits to Cambridge will show something of the scale, and informativeness, as well as the personal and literary qualities, of the entire text. His exemplary annotation and indexing show what might be done with a text, the absorbing interest of which (as Dr A. N. L. Munby once wrote) "can hardly be exaggerated".



Not waving but cloning? This congress of Maos brandishing their little red flags while the original maoquette clasps his copy to his breast is taken from Mao For Beginners by Ritus and Friends (170pp. London: Writers and Readers. £1.95. 0 906 386 07 1).

John Coates

In court circles

By G. R. Elton

WILFRID PREST (Editor):

Lawyers in Early Modern Europe and America
216pp. Croom Helm, £12.50.
0 7099 0060 0

The present renaissance of legal history is one of the most cheering prospects on the historical scene. The subject flourishes in part because the records of the law constitute our largest body of unexplored material, but mainly because the importance of the law as a mirror as well as a stimulant of social change—the message of Meilander—has come to be recognized for the years between 1500 and 1800 when that parenthood was at its height. True, these new investigations have too often served the rather narrow interests of too many historians, in crime, an interest roused by sympathy with "the victims of society", but the more difficult and more fruitful aspects have also come under review. We are beginning to grasp that we cannot discuss such things as landownership, the fortunes of

the peasantry (if there was one), the claims of monarchy, even the state of trade, without a real understanding of what was happening to the law; and that understanding has grown remarkably in the past twenty years or so.

All these topics have been wrested from the dead hand of traditional lawyers' legal history; and perhaps the most striking manifestation of this new enterprise has been the disappearance of Holdsworth's name from footnotes. Admittedly, the general historian, already much exercised over his need to equip himself in economic theory, political thought and theology, finds himself now obliged to peruse the thesaurus of arcane of all systems of knowledge. What chance have the problems of the money supply or Anabaptist views of the eschaton when we are confronted by "formed in the descender"? However, the exercise will do all of us only good.

Learning about the law has naturally involved an investigation of the people who made and practised that law, and this collection of essays on lawyers is a welcome pulling together of many hitherto scattered strands. Wilfrid Prest apologises for the prevalence of English studies in his volume, but that is where most of the work has been done. Thus

J. H. Baker provides a typically lucid and systematic conspectus of the profession in the century (1450-1550) which he has made his own. He prefers to stick to a precise definition of lawyers which confines itself to those working in the courts, whereas C. W. Brooks, covering the years 1558-1642, pulls in the penumbra of "men of business"—losing clarity but adding social breadth.

Prest himself (1550-1700) and Daniel Duman (the eighteenth century) cover the history of the bar, the first in the most elegant essay in the book, the second with rather too much laboured tabling of social analysis. Brian Levack adds another dimension by introducing us to the civil lawyers, university-trained and employed in the courts of Church and Admiralty. His contribution probably contains the largest amount of information not generally known.

The remaining four essays leave England, though two of them do not stray very far. Stephen Botein's account of what happened in colonial America surprises by showing how very long the law there took to become professional. Alexander Murdoch's study of the problems Scotland suffers in this company by reading like the product of far from finished researches but fascinates by demonstrating

that before the sixteenth century Scots law simply did not exist. This bombshell should have some effects which it would be injudicious to consider here. Leonard R. Berlanstein, like Duman, concentrates on the social analysis of the multitudes of lawyers in pre-revolutionary (mainly provincial) France, while Richard L. Kagan, looking at Castile, most interestingly demonstrates that in that kingdom the size of the profession increased in response to mounting litigation but then failed to maintain itself as people turned away from resort to the courts. I have in England perhaps been too ready to echo contemporary convictions that it was the multiplying of lawyers that expanded the business of the law.

One remarkable fact emerges from these studies which should quickly penetrate into all general accounts. Lawyers in particular have supposed that the division of the profession into two parts—those who handle the business of clients and prepare the cases, and those who discuss the law with the judges (solicitors and barristers)—is the special hallmark of the common law. On the contrary: it now appears that this is what prevailed everywhere, as a natural consequence of the practice involved in litigation, except in colonial

America where few men—attorneys, pleaders or judges—were trained or professional enough to care. It would therefore seem that the modern fusing of the two functions, influenced by post-Napoleonic practices and the example of the United States, represents a solution which is certainly exceptional rather than normal, and may even be thought unnatural.

All these essays are instructive, and errors appear to be virtually nonexistent—as are misprints, a point worth stressing these days. Duman deals faithfully but perhaps too considerably with E. P. Thompson's misleading insinuations about eighteenth-century attitudes. Levack probably underestimates the knowledge of the civil law to be found among English common lawyers; here mistaken notions of extreme singularity still rumble beneath the surface. I wonder how much those fashionable searches for practitioners' failures really prove, but this prosopography can raise the general wind it is no wonder that prosopography gets done. A grudging spirit might point out that a determined concentration on lawyers too regularly leaves out the law on which they lived. However, one thing at a time, and it is with gratitude that one accepts this collection of sensible, unpretentious, learned and useful studies.

Left Bank liberalism

By Eda Sagarra

JEFFREY M. DIEFENDORF:

Businessmen and Politics in the Rhineland, 1789-1834
401pp. Princeton University Press, £12.40.
0 691 05298 0

Two years ago Günter Grass lectured an audience of some 2,000 students at the University of Bonn, on the subject of German literature. They expected him, naturally enough, to talk on contemporary writing. Instead, Grass, always provocative, harangued this representative selection of West German youth on the seventeenth century. Only by devoting themselves to the discovery of their more distant past could they, he claimed, find their roots. This, to us now hackneyed phrase, would be *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as it ought to be.

In his more sober way, the author of *Business and Politics in the Rhineland 1789-1834*, alongside a host of international historians working in the field of early modern German history, is doing precisely this. A synchronic and diachronic study of Germany's regional history provides insights into the continuity of her history as a whole. At the same time his research makes an important contribution to such diverse fields as entrepreneurship, the history of semi-public institutions, and the last years of the Holy Roman Empire.

The general context of Jeffrey Diefendorf's book is the revived interest (associated with the work of J. J. Sheehan, Lothar Gall and others) in the early history of German liberalism. The focus is on three influential trading and manufacturing cities on the Left Bank of the Rhine, namely Aachen, Cologne and Crefeld.

The most important conclusion to emerge from this able and painstaking study is the evidence Diefendorf provides of continuity in a particularly turbulent period of Rhenish and German history. He illustrates the pragmatic way in which the business community adapted themselves to and exploited the apparent breaks in that continuity under the Holy Roman Empire, occupation, and eventual annexation by France, and finally the takeover by Prussia. In his detailed analysis of the political, social and economic behaviour of the business community of the Left Bank, and of the commercial institutions which they nurtured and salvaged, Diefendorf is in fact giving an account of the political education of Rhenish liberals. The history of a social group becomes the political history of a region.

Several chapters are devoted to the history and analysis of the commercial institutions of the three cities.

These proved vital to the community's successful adaptation to French rule on the Left Bank; membership brought leading families into a direct personal relationship with the minister of the interior at Paris and offered opportunities of playing a political role both in the region and in the state. The same would hold good under the bureaucratic absolutism of post-Napoleonic Prussia. The education of the French rulers, particularly in the Napoleonic period, is shown on the one hand by the way they managed to associate the political commitment of local notables to the new regime with the social standing of these groups, and on the other by French readiness to utilise in the service of France the skills which local businessmen had acquired under the old regime. The merchants and manufacturers, whatever initial or particular resistance they might offer, quickly came to appreciate the benefit to the region of such reform measures as the abolition of the guilds and the lifting of religious disabilities on businessmen in Aachen and Cologne.

The transfer from French to Prussian rule was surprisingly successful, if not always smooth. As Diefendorf says, it was what Prussia refrained from doing as much as what she did which in the end secured the loyalty of the Rhenish business community. The Prussians, as the French before them, seemed perfectly ready to permit officials who had served the previous regime to continue in office under the new. There appears to have been little resentment on the part of the new authorities that the Rhenishlanders enthusiastically celebrated Napoleon's birthday on August 15, half a year after the expulsion of the French. In fact, or that work continued on his monument in Crefeld. True, the Prussians showed little sensitivity to local feelings. The Cologne notables in particular were angry at the transfer of the regional capital to Koblenz, and the siding of the new royal university on the Rhine to the University of Bonn. Wilhelm-Universität in Berlin and Breslau, at Bonn, yet the unexpected success of the integration of the Rhineland into the kingdom of Prussia in the decades after 1815 owed much to the character of the local Prussian officials.

Because many of them were from the region or had served the French in the Rhineland or the Kingdom of Westphalia—some ultimately became Prussian government ministers—they defended the economic interests of the Rhineland to an increasingly successful degree. The most important of all they persuaded the new government to retain the French legal system and commercial code. The chambers of commerce, commercial courts and consular tribunals were retained, though not without a struggle, and once again became a source of political influence and social standing to those who held office in them. Officials employed direct access to the ministries

of finance and trade, which in the period 1815-1834 were generally headed by liberally-minded professional civil servants, well disposed towards the Rhineland. Moreover, the support and encouragement given by the Prussian officials to innovative business ventures in the Rhineland, notably in the field of steamships, railways and insurance, created a sense of community between business and government circles. Ultimately this proved more important to what was rapidly becoming a political, as well as a social élite, than the abortive question of a legislative assembly.

If this elegantly written and highly informative study has a fault, it is the neglect of the educa-

tional and cultural formation and of the social habits of the business community (Köhlmann's study of nineteenth-century Barmen was exemplary in this regard). Many personalities from Rhenish history appear and reappear in the course of the narrative, as they did in public life under the three regimes. They include well-known figures such as the son of Goethe's erstwhile friend, Friedrich Nicolai, and the father of his young protégé, Sulpiz and Melchior Boisse. Among them are illustrious names from Rhenish and Prussian history, the mayors of Cologne, Wittgenstein and Merken, Camphausen and David Hansemann. Yet they and their associates remain

The cash nexus

By Malcolm Falkus

G. R. HAWKE:

Economics for Historians
237pp. Cambridge University Press, £10.50 (paperback, £3.95).
0 521 22334 8

Can a knowledge of economic theory improve historical understanding? G. R. Hawke believes that it can, and his book is an endeavour to bring such a knowledge, albeit at an elementary level, within the grasp of the average undergraduate. "Oddly, one of the effects of the 'new economic history' of the past two decades has sometimes been to elevate statistics and mathematical manipulations above the more humdrum discipline of economics itself. Often the economic model involved in a particular historical study has appeared to play a secondary role to the analysis of the model," writes Stravinsky, who claimed to begin with technique and finish with inspiration, the new economic historians seem all too frequently to begin with technique, and leave it there.

Economics has, indeed, a crucial role to play in economic history, especially of the kind that has been practised in recent years. Not a few major advances and revisions in the subject rest upon some aspect of theory, while often it is necessary to understand precisely the limitations and assumptions of economic theory applied to history in order to see what the results of the application of the results obtained can be placed in context. Aside from any particular theory, the economist's approach involves the strict formulation and testing of hypotheses—under "rigid" abstract assumptions. The book could be said to be a guide to the use of the tools of the economist, and it is with some such cautioning that the author introduces the unfamiliar meanings attached

to familiar words, is evidently desirable.

Professor Hawke's book is the first major attempt to write an economics textbook specifically for history students. His method is to select those aspects of theory (from traditional market economics) which are encountered most frequently by actual historical work. He proceeds to give a short account of these, using diagrams but keeping mathematical expressions to a minimum (and, where mathematics is used, always giving a verbal explanation as well). He provides notes as well as, and as clear as, the various historical works which have made use of the particular theories he discusses; the text contains very little history and the rather extensive footnotes contain very little economics.

The approach is, therefore, eclectic. The internal logic of economics and the familiar sequence of topics found in most textbooks are eschewed in favour of complexity, and a novel ordering of subject-matter. Thus an input-output table is introduced almost at once, the multiplier and accelerator considered before demand curves, and production functions, identification, and consumer's surplus treated before perfect competition.

The success or otherwise of the volume must be judged by whether the coverage and depth of the selected topics are appropriate, and whether the formal exposition is clear and accurate. On these counts the book is certainly successful. The range of topics treated is impressive, and includes, among others, and in addition to those I have mentioned, discussion of growth and technical change, international trade and tariffs, and public policy. The level is elementary, yet the book is sound and will provide a first-class primer for those who are interested in the subject. The book could be said to be a guide to the use of the tools of the economist, and it is with some such cautioning that the author introduces the unfamiliar meanings attached

curiously two-dimensional through-out, both as individuals and as social types. Diefendorf's prime concern is of course not the Rhenish businessmen as a social group, but rather the growth in political power and political pragmatism in that well-to-do, gifted and flexible social stratum. His aim is to throw new light on a key period of Germany's regional and national history. By showing how businessmen on the Left Bank learnt to appreciate their political role, he circumvents the constitutional circumstances which have made the growing political élite less to have adverse effects on the subsequent history of liberal democracy in their country.

are willing to undertake a little hard work and concentration to master the material concerned.

Not all will approve without reservation the author's selection of topics. For example, the brief mention of general equilibrium hardly does justice to the numerous analytical studies using such a method. Moreover there is scant mention of the dangers of inappropriateness of using the term "scarcity" of theory in historical studies, surely a point which would have been useful to the reader who has not had his mind. Nor does Hawke always give adequate references, or, at the point, for example, of citing an unpublished paper, of unknown date, given at St Antony's College, Oxford, on an unrecorded date. One of the many cases where a book cited without note of page or chapter is that of Hawke's normally careful notes. In some instances there are confusing misprints and sloppily labelled diagrams.

Professor Hawke's book will prove the less less welcomed by students and teachers. It goes a long way towards filling a notable gap and stands a fair chance of convincing even the most traditional of historians that economic theory has something to offer them.

Edited by William G. Andrews and Stanley Hoffman, *The Fifth Albany*, 11c at Twenty, (521pp). State University of New York Press, \$34. 0 87395 439 4. It is a collection of twenty-six essays, the product of an international conference held in 1978. The intention behind the conference was "to bring to the attention of the public the importance of the French Republic on France." For the first time since the end of the Second World War, French opinion has been expressed in a book exploring various aspects of the economy, foreign policy and defence. The contributors are all academics, most part French or American,

Rows and revolutions

By Eric Korn

LYNN BARBER:

The Heyday of Natural History
320pp. Cape, £9.50.
0 224 01448 X

Clearly, only has-beens have heydays; the truly admirable have creative peaks, zeniths, Golden Ages, or floruits. That affectionately condescending "heyday" (or courtly *abusyon*, Ratty bully, jolly rutterkyn, heyday? Skelton) proclaims Lynn Barber's contemptuously chaffing attitude to the Victorians: this fatally mangled, some and modestly priced book which assembles much amusing anecdote and entertaining material, albeit from secondary sources.

If we must chop the tree of knowledge into planks of precise length, there is fine enough timber in the nineteenth century: both the establishment of the physico-chemical framework that freed biology from the spectre of supernaturalism, and the recognition of two of the principles—some would say the two principles—by which biology transcends physics and chemistry: the cell theory and the principle of evolution. And all the while workaday botanists and zoologists were constructing that cathedral of taxonomy that the South Kensington Science Museum both enshrines and embodies.

But Lynn Barber takes a more basic view of scientific progress as a succession of rows and revolutions (a sort of rickety Kahn), and by her standards taxonomic consolidation is small beer, or weak formaldehyde. This gives her an entirely facetious conundrum to solve: the period of natural history's greatest popularity coincided with a period of scientific stagnation in biological progress. Between the publication of Cuvier's *Le Règne Animal* in 1817 and Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, almost no major breakthroughs were made.

How major a breakthrough, one wonders, would count? Between 1817 and 1859 von Baer founded embryology, Schleiden and Schwann established the cell theory, Liebig and Pasteur were beginning biochemistry, physical anthropology, and palaeontology had their Kitty Hawk. . . . If that is a stagnant pool, I would hate to sail a choppy one.

The dubious paradox is resolved by the still more dubious proposition that it was lack of scientific progress that made natural history as popular; alternatively, it is suggested that the Victorians took to the vacuum and the microscope because the Victorian Age was so boring, and servants for women had to do the housework. Moreover biology just did the daily walk: "merely to give adequate references, or, at the point, for example, of citing an unpublished paper, of unknown date, given at St Antony's College, Oxford, on an unrecorded date. One of the many cases where a book cited without note of page or chapter is that of Hawke's normally careful notes. In some instances there are confusing misprints and sloppily labelled diagrams.

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of *Species* sold in Darwin's lifetime. But she also asserts that the dangerous doctrines of Lyell turned people away from geology ("only very brave amateurs were tempted to continue with it") until the irreproachably orthodox Hugh Miller reassured them.

This doldrum would seem to cover the years 1830-1841, the time of busy publication by Phillips, Buckland's *Bridgewater Treatise*, and Lyell himself reprinting large editions. Miller's suicide, she believes, turned the faint-hearted off again: "many a country parson and diligent mechanic who had taken up the geological hammer under the benign influence of *The Old Red Sandstone* put it away in dismay when he heard of Miller's end."

Ms Barber traduces her own sex by deprecating women's achievements. Of course the free practice of science was made difficult for women, and they were offered a safety-valve: but despite this they were more than the sedulous collectors, meticulous illustrators, writers of uplifting fatitudes and supportive wives she catalogues.

Mrs Loudon is abused for her *Entertaining Naturalist* (which is little more than a new edition of Thomas Boreman's 300 Animals, an eighteenth-century bestiary, from which little except entertainment is to be expected), but her serious botany is passed over. Mrs Gatty is singled out for praise as the one "who stands above the *Entertaining Naturalist* crowd," but Barber omits the zoologist Isabel Gifford, the mycologist Mrs Hussey, and the translator of Humboldt's *Kosmos* Mrs Sabine; she even omits Mary Somerville, whose *Molecular and Microscopic Science* was published in 1869. (The Royal Society would not admit her sex, but paradoxically allowed her bust half-way up the stairs.)

The damage that notions of natural theology and divine benevolence did to dispassionate observation is likewise overstated. Indeed this preconception clouds Ms Barber's own vision:

Writers were prepared to exercise agency in finding evidence of intrinsic goodness in the most unlikely animals. Maria Catlow, in *Popular British Entomology*, remarks that earwigs are generally disliked . . . but, she triumphantly reveals, they are wonderfully conscientious mothers who spend hours constructing safe and comfortable nests for their children, and therefore, in spite of their uselessness, their and their annoying habit of creeping into people's ears, they are nevertheless good. . . .

This is quite funny. But what Maria Catlow actually says is: "Displeased and disliked as these harmless insects are, owing to the generally received opinion, false as it is . . . the earwig seems gifted with something approaching to the maternal attachment evinced by the higher order of vertebrates. Not only in taking great care of her eggs, but in brooding over them like a hen and collecting them when scattered about. . . . Ought we then to feel contempt or dislike for an inoffensive little creature, the peculiarity in whose habit and structure testifies that it is the hand of Omnipotence has been engaged in its construction? Why should it thus differ, unless to excite our attention and reward our research?"

Not nearly so funny, and no mention of ugliness, edibility, goodness or badness, or of the earwig's nest-building. The suspicion grows that Lynn Barber dislikes natural history as much as she dislikes the Victorians. There are certain revealing phrases: the microscope was not then the loathed and dreaded piece of school equipment that it is today. Morris's *British Birds* is "quite stupefyingly dull," the first chapters of Gosse's *Omphalos* are "an exceptionally dull exposition of a lot of quite unexceptionable facts." (It is not dull, for Gosse placed no school equipment in it on theology: it is, however, thorough, testifying to Gosse's fair-mindedness for he is accumulating arguments for the other side.)

Gosse suffers from Lynn Barber's dramatic sense. The argument of *Omphalos* is not that the world was put into the rocks to make the world seem older, to confuse geologists, or to test people's faith; merely that if the world was created by

divine fiat, it could only be created as a going concern, with a created (not faked) past. The geological evidence could no more tell you when the world was created than the age of a character could tell you how long a play had continued since the rise of the curtain. His failure was not fatally but historical irrelevance: the age of reconcilers was past.

It is true that Gosse was hurt by the rejection of *Omphalos* in 1857 and true that he wrote fewer popular books thereafter; but the death of his first wife in the same year doubtless occasioned some of his dejection, and his second wife's receipt of a legacy removed some of the incentive to publication. Lynn Barber mentions neither of these humdrum causes, and speaks of him "burying himself" in the Rotifers or wheel-animals, as though this was a strange or improper interest for a zoologist, or as if the mere mention of Rotifers was intrinsically humorous, like sausages. A similar emphasis mars the account of Wallace, whom we are invited to view as driven to spiritualism and crankiness through disappointment at not receiving his due reward as Darwin's colleague.

But Lynn Barber's method is entertaining, especially when she tells of characters who less engage one's attention: Buckland licking miraculous blood from the stone of a foreign cathedral ("I can tell you what it is, it is bat's urine"), the remarkable Waterton and the ineffectual Agassiz ("permit me to recall to your memory your promise to let me have the bodies of some Indians," he wrote to Edwin Stanton, who was rather preoccupied with the American Civil War at the time).

Ms Barber has a gift for exposition, and her statement of the theories of uniformitarianism, of Lamarckism, of Darwinism itself, are succinct and accurate. But the work is riddled with errors. The tale, after all, implies a thesis about chronology, and how can one afford confidence to the chronological conclusions of someone who misdates on occasion the publication of Jardine's *Natural History* (a central book for her discussion), *Voyage of the Beagle*, *Variation and Domestication*, and even Darwin's death. There are pages of references, but they are often unhelpful. In what edition of *Gladius* does Charles Kingsley mention *Omphalos*? There is a reference, but it is only to Una Pope-Hennessy's biography. A letter of Darwin to Buffon is cited not from the latter itself, or even from Darwin's *Life and Letters*, but from William Irvine's excellent *Apes, Angels, and Victorians*—and even then the page reference is incorrect.

Lynn Barber makes much of a sort of conspiracy of silence about Darwinism in Victorian writing, as opposed to controversialists. Believing there to be no such conspiracy, I took at random the first three post-Darwinian biology books that came to hand. The first partly confirmed her theory: A. Romer's *Associated Natural History* (1872) quoted Darwin's non-humanism of the gorilla without referring to Huxley. But a translation of Figuer's *Reptiles and Birds* (1870) actually had a footnote by the translator controverting the author, and vouching for the propriety of Darwin's theories, while the frankly hostile *Rings from the Realm of Nature or Parables from Plant Life* by James Nail drew a parallel between the natural selection of flower forms and the development of good or bad habits.

Non-pollinated plants, like the virtuous, grow more beautiful and perfect, while plants that chose to be pollinated by carrion-loving insects, like those who pursued wicked companions, grew foul to nose and ear. A spectacular example of the cooption of subversive doctrines in the defence of law and order.

In *Horse Breeding in Ireland: and the Role of the Royal Dublin Society*, George Breeding Schemes 1886-1903 (223pp), A. Allen, £12.50, 0 85131 315 9. Colin Lewis covers horse breeding at the end of the last century and shows how the Royal Dublin Society attempted to improve horse breeding. He demonstrates how the Society's schemes formed a backbone of nineteenth-century government; involvement in non-throughbred horse production throughout Ireland and assesses the present condition of the industry.



This scroll painting of a Muslim family riding a spotted tiger is from Santal Parganas, Bengal, c. 1930; it is one of many illustrations in Nicholas Courtney's *The Tiger: Symbol of Freedom* (110pp. Quartet Books, £9.95. 0 7043 2245 5). Belief in the magical properties of man-eaters and were-tigers generated cults of the tiger, and a folk literature rich in stories about the animal—nowhere is this more evident than in Bengal, with its own notorious variety. The book describes how the tiger, a severely endangered species, lives in its natural habitat—no easy task since it is a solitary, mostly nocturnal animal, a hunter of large prey at home only in areas where reed beds and forest provide sufficient cover. Mr Courtney also explores the role in legend, art and literature of this "uncrowned king of beasts".

Ducks and geese

By Evan Jones

JOHN MARCHINGTON:
The History of Wildfowling
288pp. Adam and Charles Black, £9.95.
0 7136 2053 6

Written by an enthusiast as a hobby, this book apparently aims principally to provide summer reading for other wildfowling: it is loosely packed with random information, included as it takes the author's fancy rather than on any more pedestrian principle.

Others lured by the title, or by the blurb's or foreword's claims to the definitive filling of a niche, should be warned that this is not a piece of scholarly summation. John Marchington's bibliography is long, but seems to have been gathered principally from antiquarian book-dealers; and the first reference I wanted to check was not included in it. At one point, there is a brief

divagation on the difficulties "for ordinary mortals like you and me" on the arduousness of gaining access to the British Library.

Although it begins with backward-looking chapters, the book's main interest is duck and goose-shooting in Great Britain (tacitly England) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and although social history is explicitly eschewed, the abiding question is its standing as a gentlemanly sport.

For the outsider perhaps the chief interest of the book will lie in Mr Marchington's torn sympathies. He deprecates the callousness of nineteenth-century hunters, but when it comes to the point is more shocked by the nineteenth-century Colonel Hawker's using a duck-gun for partridge than he is by the same man's enjoyment of "cripple-chase." Cripple-chasing, the running-down with dogs of maimed wildfowl, must have been at its height with punt-gunning in which "wildfowl are shot at a time, killing or maiming scores of birds. This is what Mr Marchington regards as the acme of wildfowling.

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Public life and private space

By Rachel Billington

JUNE BADENI:

The Slender Tree
A Life of Alice Meynell
268pp. Padstow: Tabb House.
£10.95.
0 907018 01 7

Alice Meynell was a very private sort of public person. Vita Sackville-West in her introduction to a centenary collection of prose and poetry published in 1947 wrote, "A young, she retains the quality of a legend still. Ethereal rather than real, she seemed to live with a nimbus of adoration round her...". Alice Meynell's daughter, Viola, in a loving memoir published in 1923 notes that "With her children she had always preserved the privacy and formality of a stranger in personal things, so that even in all the crowded life of their childhood they had never once seen her unfinished or unprepared". One of her great friends, Katherine Tynan, wrote to her, "But you are somehow far away and seem as if you can't be without people even if you can't". Over and over again she is depicted as a woman who moved with her own space round her, someone who in a room crowded with many children and celebrities (in rough summary of the usual visitors to her drawing-room) still seemed set apart.

Perhaps it is for this reason that, although her name is still well known, she has not attracted the kind of biographical attention that other writers of no greater status have been accorded. In her lifetime her reputation was so high that she was considered a serious contender for the Poet Laureate-ship. Even *The Times* noted when listing candidates, "Miss Meynell would add, and not without some reason, that there is a Mrs Meynell...".

Now June Badeni has attempted to put together the private life with the public. She has also, sensibly enough in the case of someone whose work is as unfashionable as Alice Meynell's, printed a fair selection of her writing throughout the book. (Although, to get a cavil out of the way early, I feel she made the wrong decision in leaving out one of her most beautiful and best-known poems, "Renunciation", in favour of a less-known, less-successful poem on the same subject.)

Alice (Thompson) Meynell was born in 1847 to an "artistic" mother and older father, a friend of Charles Dickens who had originally introduced them. There was also a sister, Elizabeth, who became the first woman painter to exhibit in the Royal Academy. The girls spent their childhood with their family wandering through Italy and France with a very un-Victorian lack of formality. When they returned to England, Elizabeth soon began to paint seriously but Alice took longer to find her way, suffering the anguish of the Victorian young lady who was expected to do nothing. "A girl may go mad with her own soul over needwork; but she could not do so at college; or studying for the bar or for a civil service examination... O my dream, my dream! When will you be realized to gladden my soul, to redeem my trampled and polluted sex...".

At length, however, she discovered the two main springs of her life—Catholicism and poetry. At first she had some doubts about the poetry, "I wonder if I will be melancholy and self-conscious as all women's poetry". But about Catholicism she never seems to have wavered from the first moment of certainty. This was despite, or perhaps because of, the terrible period of trial she immediately underwent when she fell deeply in love with the young priest who had prepared her to enter the church. This unhappiness inspired the poem already mentioned, "Renunciation". Here, explicitly, she jotted on a scrap of paper, "Thou, innocent saintly and pure, if I fled to thee open again I should be parted for ever from thee, thou opposite of me. And a kiss would divide us as neither lands nor seas could ever do". In the light of this experience, had much to do with the impression of self-sacrifice, even coldness, which she gave many people in her later life. It perhaps

also prepared her to face any temptation from her many distinguished and fervent admirers. She had already been through a greater fire when she was in a more susceptible state of mind.

In 1877 she married Wilfred Mitchell, a Catholic poet and journalist, and together they embarked on a career of writing, children (eight born, seven survived) and literary dialogue. Their house became a centre for many of the best-known writers of their day, mostly, though not always, also Catholic. As critics or editors for such magazines as *The Pall Mall Gazette*, *The Weekly Register*, *Merry England*, *The Saturday Review*, *The National Observer*, they were soon influential literary figures.

It was from Alice's role as appreciative critic that all three of her famous admirers came into her life. The poet Francis Thompson was literally taken off the streets by the Meynells and, although always remaining Wilfred's responsibility more than hers, he fell deeply, if hopelessly in love with her, addressing her in his letters as "Madonna carissima". To him she gave sisterly comfort and literary advice. George Meredith was a grand old man of letters even when she first met him, with whom she could enjoy without danger the sort of loving literary relationship she preferred. She called him "The Master".

Much more serious than either of these was her friendship with Coventry Patmore, her "dearest friend". Although Patmore was in his sixties and married happily for the third time to a young wife, he demanded far more from Alice than Thompson ever dared and far more than Alice was able to give. Even so, for four years they shared a friendship which, although fully countenanced by Wilfred Meynell and apparently based on mutual admiration for each other's work, was very strange indeed by Victorian standards. June Badeni is at pains to point out that Alice sold everything to Wilfred and that the eventual break came not because Wilfred felt jealous but because he felt Patmore's obsessive love and jealousy caused Alice pain.

However a farewell note to Alice written by June just before his death and quoted in Derek Patmore's *The Life and Times of Coventry Patmore* suggests that there was more between them than she admitted: "Let not your thoughts deny nor your heart forget the things your eyes have seen. Do not destroy the immortality of your truest visions by calling them

moods. You are not disloyal to any lesser good in transcending the higher. Our meeting again in heaven depends on your fidelity to the highest things you have known."

Earlier in the same book Derek Patmore talks of Alice being frightened by Patmore's physical love and withdrawing into the "crystal fortress of her intellect", suggesting a lack of humanity. Alice levelled a similar criticism at herself when nearing death. She wrote to Mother St Ignatius who had become something of a confessor to her in America, "... as to sorrow, my failure of love to those that loved me can never be cancelled or undone. So I never fail in a provision of grief for any night of my life."

In contradiction to this severe self-criticism there is the evidence of the lasting love she inspired in her husband and children and on a more exalted level the tribute written by the same man but echoing in the views of many others. "She uplifts by the most passing mental contact". Perhaps it is this virtue which has contributed to her fall from the public eye. Virtue is not a very fashionable characteristic nor, one must admit, very easy to write about.

June Badeni has not entirely succeeded, allowing herself to fall in with the style of an admiring memoir rather than a searching biography. It does not always do her subject a service. For example, as Alice Meynell enters her last illness Ms Badeni quotes from an essay she had written years before: "the story of pain should not be told of us seeing that by it would assuredly not be told". Ms Badeni follows this by the single sentence, "Let it then suffice to say that after seven weeks of illness she died at dawn on November 27, 1922". Although a nice homage to her subject it does not, frankly, suffice for the reader. Possibly she was following Vita Sackville-West who ends the biographical part of her introduction on the same note except that she includes her last words as reported in her daughter's memoir, "This is not tragic, I am happy".

It is interesting to speculate on the use of "happy" here. It applies to her life. From the feminist standpoint of the 1980s, one of the most striking aspects of Alice Meynell's life is her success in joining the role of wife and mother with that of writer and breadwinner and this a full hundred years ago. Naturally, this may have been helped by the availability of servants; although a complaint in the early days of her

marriage casts some doubt: "I am a most gentle and considerate mistress, yet I have had nine different cooks, five housemaids... three nurses...".

Certainly she was blessed with an adoring, hard-working, intelligent husband's support in everything she did. Spiritually, and here Ms Badeni is very convincing in her emphasis, she found through her Catholicism the discipline which gave her the emotional security from which she could operate effectively. This is not to say Catholicism made life easy for Alice Meynell but that it became possible. Her "dark night of the soul" to which Mother St Ignatius refers must never have been far away. It is sad that there is so little avail-

able material to illuminate this side of her character.

However the quest for virtue is a private undertaking and we have, at least, the poems and the prose. Perhaps someone will now be stimulated to examine these more thoroughly in a critical study. The prose works will always be historically interesting even if they do not appeal. Personally, I prefer the poetry and can only wish that the "brand-winner" who needed to churn out essays had less time for the creator. This, too, may have been an unhappiness she had to face. The last verse of her poem "The Poet to the Birds" reads: "My human song must be / My human thought. Be patient / I shall not hold my little peace; / There is no peace but one."

Poet Who Will Wed



POET IN LOVE SONG EXTOLS HIS BRIDE

Ezra Pound, Wyncote Boy, Who Achieved Fame Abroad, Soon to Wed.

Phila. Poet in Storm Tells of His Romance

Man's love follows many ways. My love only one face knew. Towards thee only my love dwelt. And outspits the swift winged peace. Were this love well but played, As flame dwelt 'neath the jade. Love should glow through these phrases.

An engagement photograph of the brilliant young local poet Ezra Pound, published in the Philadelphia Press in March 1914, to illustrate the announcement of his forthcoming marriage to Miss Dorothy Shakespear of Brunswick Gardens, London. The newspaper account describes his mother as "a naturally very proud of her son's career". The illustration is taken from Ezra Pound and his world by Peter Ackroyd (127pp. Thames and Hudson, £5.95) which will be reviewed in a future issue of the TLS.

Modernistically muddling

By Lachlan Mackinnon

MICHAEL ANDRE BERNSTEIN:

The Tale of the Tribe
Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse
320pp. Princeton University Press.
£12.50 (paperback, £5.55).
0 691 06434 2

WENDY STALLAND FLOREY:

Ezra Pound and The Cantos
A Record of Struggle
321pp Yale University Press, £12.50.
0 300 02392 8

GEORGE KEARNS:

Guide to Ezra Pound's Selected Cantos
306pp. Brighton: Harvester-Dawson.
£15.50.
0 7129 0988 5

Ezra Pound embarks on his admirers: as soon as criticism of the Cantos moves from the aesthetic to the intellectual, it enters what appears to be a realm of unending Michael Bernstein's illuminating thesis is that the middle belongs not to Pound's ideas, which can be sorted into various kinds of discourse and appropriately dealt with, but to the form of modern verse which he invented. Pound is shown to be concerned to do with the impression of self-sacrifice, even coldness, which she gave many people in her later life. It perhaps

poetic truth. He seeks an impersonal, empirical base from which to address a plural audience. Incoherence arises because the types of discourse Pound brings together are not mutually married. Pound's intimations of divinity are subject to no order, while exciting in the spontaneity it permits, prevents him from showing how they can be related to the history he recounts. Eternal values and contingent process remain apart.

Professor Bernstein adduces William's *Pateron* and Olson's *Maximum Poems* to show that such discontinuity between poetic vision and historical process is intrinsic to the form. The new epic cannot, as Pateron's fifth book attempts, lose its poetic affirmation but cannot, as Olson's *Projective Verse* attempts, What happens in the *Peter Cantos* is that Pound's own voice, hitherto marginal to the poem, comes to be the central subject as it interrogates and condemns itself, a process repeated by *Drifts and Fragments*, while *Rock-Drifts* and *Thrones* address a distant future rather than the present audience of earlier cantos. The tragedy of the *Cantos* record is as much that of their own form as that of the poet. Bernstein shows that Pound's poem escapes his disavowal from the author's personal, concrete history and prose it absorbs multiply its voices; the contradictions between the voices reflect the contradictions in experience for which Pound seeks an answer. The poem's incoherence, viewed as the "poetic world" questioned, the "poetic back" from the novel because, he does not believe in a self-referencing

ately refrains from abolishing the poem, suggesting rather that the poet's form grants it a wider success than Pound's own ideas might be thought to permit. His study is remarkably faithful to what reading the poems he discusses feels like.

With Wendy Florey we are on more traditional theoretical ground. Her argument centres on the lyrical passages in the Cantos, which many of Pound's readers have attempted to remove from their context as though their surroundings were not germane, a procedure to which she herself comes close. "Epic autobiography" is what she sees Pound as essaying, a form he finds difficult to attain because his central self-consciousness is drawn on armour itself with the cynical bitterness of a Wyndham Lewis. Her Pound is a creature rather like Hemingway, but a Hemingway who, painfully, attempts to give up blood-spots for the love of family. She offers much interesting information about the relationship between the appearance of the gods and the poet's life, the ways in which personal experience and love are transformed into myth, but she does not offer adequate, intentional account of these problems. She fails to explain why Pound writes as he does, or to appreciate that the way in which he writes is at least as important to both poet and reader as the putative personal sources the work conceals. The view of the Cantos is reduced to a discussion of the celebrated "eye" passage of *Canto 61* tells us that:

There are three pairs of eyes and they belong to three women who are very much alive. We learn

from Mary (do Rachewiltz) that her mother has "violet-blue eyes, clear and luminous", and that Dorothy Pound's eyes are "a deep blue". ... Bride Scruton's eyes must have been green of method. We find a double error in the simplifying light of biography, but one of the "facts" about Pound's love is only a hypothesis assumed to sustain the reading. No poetry, let alone Pound's elusive, painstaking invention, works or can be put to work in this way.

I pick up this moment in the argument because it typifies the book's warming but dubious tone. Pound's admirers naturally wish his poetry suggests, and it is not unusual to feel that a reading of his must have sensed that any object would reveal a set of aims and programs to which he would be violently opposed. However, as late as *Thrones* (1959) Pound perceives "Adolf furious" from perception; not to recognize the leading nature of Pound's perversity is to strip Pound's poet and poem of their rebellious dignity.

George Kearns's study uses the *New Directions Selected Cantos*, which is slightly expanded from the *Faber* text. It provides a useful reference guide to Pound's allusions and general remarks, on each section of the poem. However, it is tied to whole poem. However, it is an eccentric compilation in which text. Students, at whom the book seems to be aimed, should be using what is affected by an inner linear gloss to parts of it.

RUSSIAN LITERATURE

MARINA TSVETAIEVA:

Sukhotvoreniya I poetry
Edited by A. A. Saakyan
576pp. Leningrad: Sovetskii
pissel. 2 rubles.

Ibrannaya proza v dvukh tomakh
1917-1937

499+365pp. New York: Russia
Publishers. £15.
0 8930 004 5

The Demeane of the Swans/
Lebediny stan
Edited and translated by Robin
Kemball.

211pp. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis.
\$15 (paperback, \$7.50).
0 88233 493 X

After hearing some of Marina Tsvetaeva's poems celebrating the White Army in the Civil War, her husband, Sergey Efron, who had served as a volunteer with those forces remarked: "But it wasn't at all like that, Marinokha." The campaign he recalled had been "fratricidal and suicidal", receiving no support from the people, who failed to understand it. Tsvetaeva once declared that all through life she had been guided by "romanticism and arrogance". As it is revealingly put in the preface to the recent Soviet edition of her selected poems, commenting on Tsvetaeva's attitude during the first years of Bolshevik rule, "with exceptional obstinacy she continued to live in her own imagined world of romantic, bookish conceptions of life".

The late V. A. Rozhdetsvensky who wrote these words was seeking to explain her refusal to accept the profound changes coming about in Russia. They are not characteristic of the Tsvetaeva as a whole. Rozhdetsvensky ungrudgingly recognizes her "extreme truth of feeling" and is able, of course, to show that once in the emigration she began to look more favourably on the Soviet experiment. But it is a relief to find that neither the preface of the volume nor the notes by A. A. Saakyan bear too heavily upon Tsvetaeva's political intransigence. Naturally (at this stage of enlightenment) none of her poems about the White cause can be published in a Soviet edition; but the notes present her sympathetically, drawing freely on her letters and on the reminiscences of Ariadna Efron, the admirable daughter who devoted herself to safeguarding Tsvetaeva's legacy in the way that his widow did this for Mandelstam. It was Ariadna who with Saakyan brought out the 1955 Soviet edition of Tsvetaeva's *Selected Poems*, and the "Large Series" of the Poet's Library. This more limited selection in bulky pocket-size for the "Small Series" has retained the text of the first volume, with one exception: the *Poem of the Hill* has been subjected to various small changes. Tsvetaeva's manuscript of 1935.

The notes, except when they gloss particular words and explain allusions, have been almost completely done again and show a refreshing ability to find new quotations. Fifty thousand copies were printed of this edition, over which all in all the spirit of Ariadna still presides. We have to assume that a large number of these copies have been sold to the foreign market. However, it is not only in *Samizdat* that Tsvetaeva's poetry is reaching at least a small minority of Soviet readers.

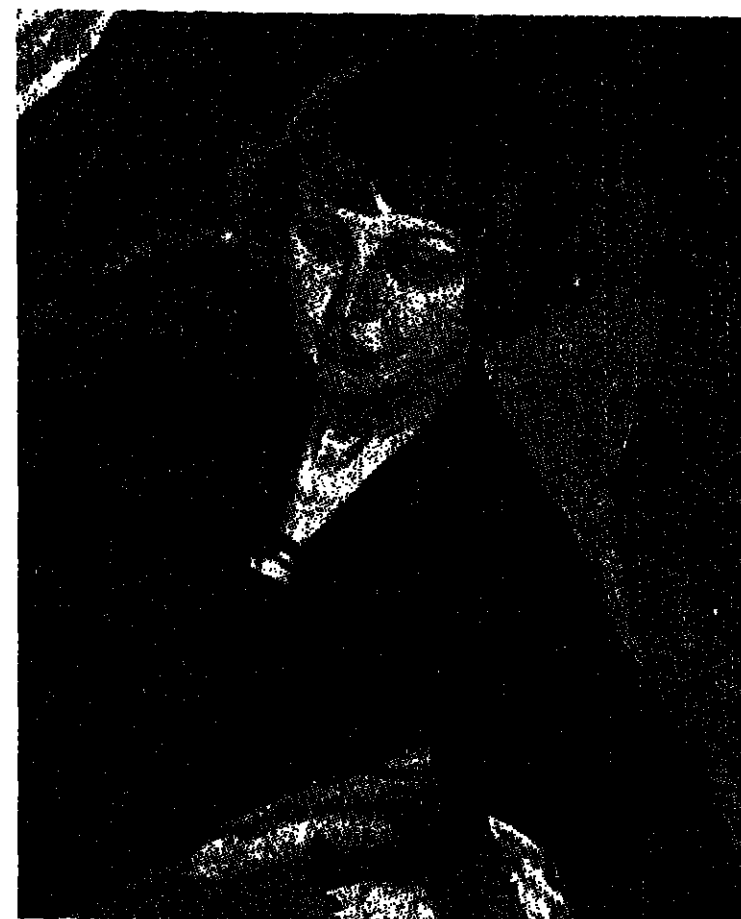
They will not have the benefit of the two-volume American edition of Tsvetaeva's *Selected Poems*, with its striking preface by Joseph Brodsky, which stimulates the brilliance of her own longer critical essays: these were excluded from the edition, apart from the first, and he retains the pre-1918 orthography which Tsvetaeva used, together with some more or less idiosyncratic spellings. The text is prefaced by a good introduction, and the notes are admirably to the point. The book concludes with a Translator's Note, on the problems of verse translation from the Russian in general, and on those particularly posed by Tsvetaeva's work.

Kemball's rendering of the title *Lebediny stan* as *The Demeane of the Swans* unaccountably breaks with the usual practice, by which *stan* is taken to mean "encampment". It can also mean "host". One of the accepted senses shows through in his version of the lines from No 55: To that white camp where the crane flies— Doves' domain and swans' demeane. The other appears by implication in the final poem (No 62): Happy New Year, Swans! Demeane! Remnant—valiant soldiers! Tsvetaeva may have chosen the "white vision" of the swans to represent the Volunteer army on the Don because they are prominent in Blok's noble poem about an earlier epic battle, *The Field of Kulikovo*, behind which can be discerned the medieval *Lay of Igor's Campaign*, also an inspiration to Tsvetaeva.

She unfolds in these poems a drama both personal and national, as Akhmatova did twenty years later in *Requiem*. Tsvetaeva resembles both Blok and Akhmatova in her historical memory, her sense of this particular war in terms of Igor's far-distant campaign and the later invasion. The poems are not in the final balance of the Russian poet's reworking (his Italian) of a theme in modern English idiom (however good in itself) than in learning what the Russian poet actually had to say...

Contending against the times

By Henry Gifford



A portrait of Marina Tsvetaeva, by Magda Nachman, painted in about 1912. The original is in the Tretyakov National Gallery, Moscow.

national epic so close to oral tradition. For the translator Tsvetaeva poses a difficult problem. Her style is so various: she once maintained that in her work "at least seven poets" were present. Whether she recalls the note of the folk ballad or the eighteenth-century ode, the spare formulations of Baranovsky and Tyutchev, or the sombre pathos of Blok, whatever she writes has a concentrated power. The poem swoops upon an experience, takes it up with strongly beating wings, and is gone. Therefore the main thing to preserve in translation will be the dynamism of each poem, the imprint made there by feeling that is on the stretch.

Kemball is a strong advocate of the "metrical" method in translation. He argues the case hotly: Hard as it may be for the poet-imitators to grasp, some English readers—well little or no Russian but with a wish to get to know their Russian poets—will be interested in reading an English poet's reworking (his Italian) of a theme in modern English idiom (however good in itself) than in learning what the Russian poet actually had to say...

The only way of ensuring this accuracy is to imitate the form as closely as possible, with its metrical pattern and rhyme-scheme, and even such features as alliteration. But is the method quite so reliable as he assumes (even though practised by this translator with determination and skill)?

The tempo of two languages rather distantly related like English and Russian is not the same. The Alexandrine, for instance, does not creak in Russian as it tends to do in English, nor are anapaests or dactyls metres the easy riders they become with us. Strict fidelity to the form of a poem can betray the spirit in which that form was used for the original. Again there are the well-known difficulties of rhyming, especially when the metre alternates masculine and feminine rhymes. Tsvetaeva exploited as Pasternak did, an extraordinary freedom of associational rhyming in which Kemball imitates her. But the Russian language, through the stressed syllable of a word into bold relief, permits a licence which our less emphatic intonation would seem to forbid. Unfortunately, the English ear is not attuned to these complexities and may mistake them for inadvertence or clumsiness.

Another difficulty resides in word-length. To fill out the metre in the English line must often result to expletives. So the splendid

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Another difficulty resides in word-length. To fill out the metre in the English line must often result to expletives. So the splendid

laconism of one poem's opening "White—a menace to black"—has to be stretched for metrical reasons into "White is steadfast—Black bids fair to yield". In place of the majestic Cradle, covered in red! Cradle, rocked by the mob!

—two lines in Russian, each of three words, the first line exactly mirrored by the second—Kemball offers Cradle, swathed in red, crimson in between them!

The choice has to be made between two compromises: to respect either the rhythm (though this will not preserve an identical weight) or the positioning of the words, which gives a dynamic structure of its own.

The metrical method has pitfalls even for so conscientious and agile a translator as this. No 54 is a famous poem on the supposed ideals of the White Army. It begins with the statement (rendered literally) "There is in my figure—an officer's straightness. There is in my ribs—an officer's honour." Tsvetaeva's poetry often dispenses with verbs—Kemball quotes a letter in which she expresses dislike for "such terrible consciousness" rearing instead, as often happens with Russian popular speech, on juxtaposition and the use of cases ("White—a menace to black"). Here she begins each line with a verb which emphasizes presence rather than action. Tyutchev often used the same device when making a discrimination of the eye or the moral sense. But the translator spills in two verbs of action:

An officer's rectitude runs in my figure, An officer's honour burns deep in my ribs. It is not carping to observe that rectitude, a static quality, cannot run. A more serious mishap occurs with "burns deep in my bones". Tsvetaeva does not describe a smouldering honour in the marrow. The translation loses sight of what matters most: the sturdy, as they are called in two other poems, expressing (to quote Kemball) "the themes of honour and courage". This connects with a reference elsewhere to "the Kremlin flanks" capable of enduring all.

Translating poetry is almost as great a hazard as writing poetry itself. "Verbal creativity" for Tsvetaeva means "walking in step with the popular and natural ear". Her translator has to be aware of the hidden resources in both Russian and English, and to take opportunities of matching them. The versions supplied here must be respected for their frequent dexterity and enterprise. But the essence of Tsvetaeva is a lyric intensity, her poetry is stripping for action, it displays "the naked, naked, naked" of the Russian language. To achieve such an effect by any method of translation would be a triumph. The "metrical" method aggravates the difficulty.

Tsvetaeva's poems on the rout of the Swans had small success with the emigration and it is ironic that her ringing verses about an officer's honour should have gone down extremely well with Red Army men. She believed, as Blok did, that great poetry responds to the very heartbeats of the epoch, catching its particular rhythm. This is the mark of the truly contemporary. As she explained it: "To be contemporary is to create your own time, that is to contend against time-teeth of it, as you contend against nine-tenths of the first draft. Brodsky, taking the image to define her position as a Russian poet, turns to Rilke's poem 'Der Legende', translated by Pasternak. There the star of the far end of the village resembles the light of a last house; and merely enlarges the parishioners' idea of their parish", as Brodsky comments. Although at the extremity, Tsvetaeva is not divorced from Russian literature. Her marvellous sense of the language ensures that her (rightful) place should be at the centre. It is not the only paradox about this extraordinary poet.

John Coates

From Republic to Principate

By Michael Crawford

RONALD SYME:
Roman Papers
Edited by E. Badian
Two volumes, 862pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £40 the set. 0 19 614367 2

Some Arval Brethren
146pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £10. 0 19 814331 3

Some historians, over their working lives, move backwards in time in the pursuit of origins; not so Sir Ronald Syme. Although some of his latest work deals with themes he first treated fifty years ago, the use he has of the whole is to move forwards, from the creation of the Principate, by way of the aristocracy which governed it in its heyday, to the historians of its later years. With the publication, at last, of *Roman Papers*, almost all of the articles Syme published down to 1970 have been collected together; these two volumes stand with *Ten Studies in Tacitus* (1970) and *Emperors and Biography* and *Danubian Papers* (both 1971); four collections of articles all to see the sequence of books beginning in 1939 and the chapters which he contributed to the *Cambridge Ancient History*.

Neither publisher nor editor of *Roman Papers* has served Syme particularly well. The selection omits an early article on Valerius Placius, which reveals at once the importance of Syme's greatness as a historian, some short technical pieces, whose inclusion would not have lengthened the volume significantly, and a number of long reviews; and the footnotes are peppered with random corrections and additions. The publishers made the irrational decision to provide an index of this incomplete oeuvre without realising the scale of the enterprise; they delayed publication for years, and then were ahead without the index when it was almost ready. To make matters worse, the advertisement on the dust-jacket actually presents *Roman Papers* as consisting of three volumes and three times, draws attention to the non-existent index.

Syme is nothing if not stylish and a diverting historian (like the author of the *Historia Augusta* in these respects if no other), and there is a great deal of enjoyment to be had in re-reading or reading the articles and reviews collected in *Roman Papers*; a footnote on the repetition by one scholar after another of the cliché about Livy dying with his pen in his hand and its expunction by one who was allowed second thoughts, a paragraph turned aside to a delightful remark by Gibbon on some *Lives* by Jerome, "the only defect in these pleasing compositions is the want of truth and common sense".

But the prevailing impression is one of amazement at Syme's mastery of the whole of the written source material for a given subject or period: poets as well as historians, Virgil as well as Livy, Juvenal as well as Tacitus. The same encyclopedic approach embraces also the evidence of inscriptions and coins, though they are used primarily for what they record or proclaim. Syme is not on the whole interested in the use of inscriptions in statistical inquiries or in the patterns of production and circulation of Rome's coinage; variations from province to province in the commemoration of death, or in the extent of the foundation of Roman colonies, do not form part of the historical pictures which he has set himself to create (though unlike Wilhelm Weber he knows the work of K. J. Beloch on the size of the population of Palestine). Nor does the evidence of inscriptions and coins, which he uses so effectively, although, beside the literary and epigraphical (and numismatic) evidence for the settlement of veterans in Italy in the age of revolution, he may set the visual evidence for its corollary—the declining use of local styles of funeral monuments; and the paradox that in a period when Italians were engaged in plundering the Mediterranean on a massive scale they also bothered to export wine and tableware; requires explanation just as much as the more obvious crimes of Roman imperialism.

Three great themes seem to stand out in Syme's work. The first was perhaps brought on him from outside, so to speak, when he was asked to write the chapters for the first edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History* on the frontiers of the Early Empire. On this theme he has written not only these chapters themselves, with their marvelous sense of geography, and some important technical articles on legionary dispositions and related topics, but also a brilliant piece on Virgil's Fourth Eclogue (whose relevance to frontier policy may best be discovered by reading Syme's article) and a splendidly sane account of the finances of Domitian, Nerva and Trajan. This last essay was clearly provoked in part by an article of Carcopino on the Roman acquisition of Dacia, twice reprinted despite its essential weakness. The latest article (1970) in the present collection marks a return by Syme to his earliest interest, dealing as it does with the Augustan conquest of north-west Spain.

The second great theme became apparent in 1937-38 when a flurry of articles on individual followers of Caesar or Augustus, and on recruitment to the Senate by Caesar, preceded, but hardly prepared the world for the *Roman Revolution*. How far do his New Zealand origins illuminate his interest in the openness of the Roman governing class to outsiders? And the severe remarks of the editor of *Roman Papers* to the effect that Syme's writings to Syme's interest in prosopography and in getting the origins, relationships and careers of the men who ran the Roman Empire right.

It is a pleasure to re-read in these volumes the ironical reference of 1937 to "Vaterländische Front", and to note that in 1939 Syme wrote reviews for *Gegenwart* and for the *Historische Zeitschrift*, *Ottaviano Capoparte*.

The *Roman Revolution* enunciated the view that "The composition of the oligarchy of government therefore emerges as the dominant theme of political history, as the binding link between the Republic and the Empire. It is something real and tangible, whatever may be the name or theory of the constitution." Unorthodoxy is, always dangerous, since it may encourage reviewers to demand yet more; and A. D. Momigliani duly remarked in review of the book that "two leading ideas not clearly distinguished presented themselves to the writer: the Revolution as a new oligarchy; the Revolution as the end of a Roman oligarchy. The latter was the right one, but the end of the Revolution could perhaps argue not only that the oligarchy of the last generation of the Republic had lost control, but also that the military dynasts of the age of revolution were themselves the real masters of their fate, driven there by social forces which they did not fully understand and that the system established by Augustus required the creation of a new (Italian and Mediterranean) consensus to support it and the evolution of its own social functions. But in the absence of any agreement on how to balance continuity against change (unlike some historians, I think that the apparently greater ease with which the Republic may be documented is illusory). Syme's *Roman Revolution* remains, fascinating, often compelling, and unique.

While reviewers were busy coping with it, Syme himself was in the Balkans and Turkey, his energies only partly engaged in the teaching of classical philology and in showing his mastery of the straightforward approaches to Roman history, by reviewing Gelzer on Caesar (orthodox and sensible) and Siles on Augustus (orthodox and wrong-headed). The first article, which marks the beginning of his work on his last theme, Tacitus, appeared in 1949.

Syme's Tacitus is only one level a study of the greatest of Latin historians. It spawned a long back in time an article on a fragment of Sallust, and then a full-length study of Sallust (1964) together with some associated

articles. It spawned, above all, an investigation of the last great Latin historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, and of his coeval, the author of the *Historia Augusta* (1968). On another level, Tacitus and many of Syme's articles since 1958 are about one of the most remarkable aspects of Rome: the availability of its citizenship to outsiders. A crisp and evocative account of this theme appears here at the end of a paper on "The Greeks under Roman Rule" (pages 580-1).

Alongside the work explicitly directed to this theme and to the changes from Republic to Principate, there has been a steady flow of articles simply setting the record, such as it is, straight. Faced with the sheer incompetence of the compilers of articles in encyclopedias, it is important to show there are facts about the upper orders of the Roman world which it is possible to get right; and even great works of scholarship may require friendly and courteous supplement. Again, Syme's awareness of the evidence and his sensitivity to the arguments from silence are remarkable.

It is obviously tempting to speculate on the intellectual roots of his work. How far do the experiences of the 1930s lie behind the *Roman Revolution*? How far do his New Zealand origins illuminate his interest in the openness of the Roman governing class to outsiders? And the severe remarks of the editor of *Roman Papers* to the effect that Syme's writings to Syme's interest in prosopography and in getting the origins, relationships and careers of the men who ran the Roman Empire right.

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Healthily provincial

By G. L. Huxley

C. J. EMLYN-JONES:
The Ionians and Hellenism
237pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £10.50. 0 7100 0470 2

A very big book could now be written about the early Ionians. Its geographical range could extend from the speakers of the Ionian dialect in the Cyclades to the Phokian outposts beside the far western Mediterranean, to Naucratis in Egypt, to the Milesian settlements on the shores of the Euxine, and even to Persagadai. However, in this short but well-stocked work, our attention is mainly directed to Samos, Chios and the coastlands of western Asia Minor from Diogenes in the north to the Milesians and the Hermos valley in the north. Thus the sub-title approximately represents the contents: what we have is "a study of the cultural achievement of the early Greek inhabitants of Asia Minor", but with only incidental mention of the Asiatic Dorians and Aeolians. Even so, the theme is vast, and the geographical restriction, intelligible. For there are disadvantages. For example, place is given to Eleatic philosophy, but not to the Milesian school, which is described, although the Milesians are careful work of Bernard Neveu. It is now one of the better known late Archaic Ionian cities.

As he puts the fragmentary evidence together, C. J. Emlyn-Jones moves easily from architecture to philosophy and from artifacts to lyric poetry. A sympathetic discussion of Ionian art (the treatment of sculpture is excellent) is followed by a sober account of the Homeric questions of transmission and authorship; here we are given a neat assessment of M. Perry's work, and Homer's knowledge of the landscape of Asia Minor is revealed in a chapter on the subject. In a vigorous chapter on the Milesian philosophy, Thales and Anaximander are shown at work within the competition and originality of early Ionian society; the supposition that Anaximander solved the problem of conflict, not

in the latter of which he displays scepticism about the significance of "race". But it is misleading to invoke a distant, far-distant, far-distant, in considering *The Roman Revolution*; it is the Roman oligarchy which is enduring. And it was Philip V of Macedonia and Tacitus who drew attention to the nature of Roman citizenship, long before this became a theme pursued by modern scholars. For Namer prosopography provided a (crude) tool for the explanation of political action; for Syme it clearly displays the Roman oligarchy as it was.

He has on the whole been reluctant to explain what he was doing or why; the delightful little book, *Colonial Elites—Rome, Spain and the Americas*, offers only a cursory justification for his concentration on the upper classes, while a passing remark at the beginning of an article on "Pliny the Elder and the Roman world" tells us that "Beneath the surface are the long trends of social history, to be revealed and made vivid through the emergence of men and families". And that is what, marvellously and on the whole microscopically, Syme has revealed. As with the Greek epigrapher Louis Robert and his view of the Greek city, a synthetic, interpretative vision underlies Syme's work. The Roman world and the Roman Empire were the process whereby its citizen body and hence its governing class were permanently expanded and renewed.

Syme's new study, *Some Arval Brethren*, is an example in miniature of this approach, delineating the decline in social status of the holders of an obscure priesthood which Augustus revived (or invented). The usurper Galba set the fashion of rewarding his less important followers by offering them membership, and the Flavian emperor Domitian followed suit. The element of chance, which played its part in shaping men's careers is

by eliminating it but by admitting, rather than denying it, that it is at least consonant with his few extant words. This examination of Xenophanes includes an honest admission that the problems of interpretation are immense; the Kolophonian philosopher used the puzzling words "one god, the greatest among gods and men, but there is perhaps no need to detect in them 'illogicality' and 'contradiction'"; the god of Xenophanes is overwhelmingly superior, but it does not follow that he was the only god. In his inquiry into Heraclitus, Dr Emlyn-Jones argues that the opposite doctrine may be ascribed to Ephesian; the discourse is a logos, but the Logos is the principle of arrangement in the world, and, like Fire, the Logos is a manifestation of the "dynamic flow" of the universe.

Did the failure of the Ionian revolt against Persia and the sack of Miletus mark the end of the distinctive contribution of Ionian Hellenism? Emlyn-Jones attempts to estimate the reasons for the decline and the nature of the legacy. Attic Imperial glory can be contrasted with Ionian dependence. Yet the Samians under Melissos fought doggedly against Perikles, and a society which produced Leukippos and Demokritos cannot have been in intellectual decline. Ion, Anaxagoras and Protagoras were worthy successors to Anaximander; they visited Athens, but they did not leave it to the Ionian intellectual formation was as much as the Ionian drew the attention to Ionian political and military weakness, but not even he claimed to be telling the whole Ionian story. Above all, historical malice is not to be measured in the terms of tribute lists—nor is economic malice, as Emlyn-Jones calls some aspects of. Ionian "provinciality", but now in Britain, as "central" government becomes increasingly burdensome, we can see better that provinciality may be a sign, not of inferiority but of revolted aristocracy. As the Ionian oligarchies, some rebellious, were also concerned to preserve the vital principle of local autonomy for their people.

Further to indicate the scope of this admirable book, appendices of comments on the biographical sketches of the Ionian cities, and on the

brought sharply into focus by the later success of a couple of Flavian winners. It is no accident perhaps that it is a pupil of Syme's, Fergus Millar, who coined the famous — or notorious — remark "The emperor was what the emperor did".

Of course, Syme's own understanding vision does not exclude vision and approaches different from his own. I have already lived here a somewhat different view of the transition from Republic to Principate, and analysis of the development of the Roman Empire might lead one to study the economy and society of its various provinces, to Spain, fish-sauce or Egyptian corn. Or one might investigate the Roman concept of citizenship and conclude that the Greek world was not a different after all; it is true that individual Greek cities were highly exclusive, but vast numbers of barbarian communities became Greek in the centuries after Alexander. One might consider the so-called fall of the Roman Empire in the West and observe that while the political authority of Rome was declining, anyone who wished could become a Roman. 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